Limitations

The methods used for this survey resulted in a nationally representative sample of LGBTQ youth. However, it is important to note that the sample is representative only of youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, have some connection to the LGBTQ community (either through LGBTQ organizations or through the Internet), and/or have a Facebook page. Thus, we may not have reached LGBTQ students who were not connected to LGBTQ community organizations in some way or who had limited access to computers or the Internet. We also cannot make determinations from our data about the experiences of youth who might be engaging in same-sex sexual activity or experiencing same-sex attractions but who do not identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or something else other than heterosexual (e.g., queer).

It is important to note that with respect to contact with the justice system, our survey asked about such contact resulting from school infractions. Thus, our survey asked a narrower question about justice system involvement than some other studies have asked (as this was a study of LGBTQ youth in schools).

Although the sample was relatively representative of the U.S. secondary student population in terms of region, type of school attended, and portion of students of color overall, the percentage of African American/Black youth in the sample was somewhat lower than the general population of secondary school students, which may be another possible limitation to the survey. However, any discrepancies may have resulted from different methods for measuring race/ethnicity, as most national youth surveys restrict students to selecting only one racial category, and do not provide a multiracial response option. In contrast, we allow for students in our survey to select multiple options for their race/ethnicity, and code students who selected two or more racial categories as being multiracial.

It is also important to note that our survey only reflects the experiences of LGBTQ students who were in school during the 2012–2013 school year. Thus, findings from this survey may not necessarily reflect the experiences of LGBTQ youth who had already dropped out of school, whose experiences with a hostile school climate or school discipline may differ from those students who remained in school.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings from this report demonstrate that, for many LGBTQ students, schools are hostile environments that effectively function to push students out of school, depriving them of the opportunity to learn. When LGBTQ students feel less safe, less comfortable, and less welcome in schools, they are less likely to attend and more likely to drop out. School policies that disproportionately affect LGBTQ students, such as gendered dress codes and rules about public displays of affection, also expose LGBTQ youth to greater rates of school discipline and sometimes, as a result, involvement in the justice system. Staff biases against LGBTQ students are also manifest in the discretionary use of discipline in ways that target LGBTQ students, such as punishing gay and lesbian couples for public displays of affection in school that heterosexual couples are not punished for.

Although all LGBTQ youth may face hostile climates and damaging school policies and practices, findings from this report demonstrate that some LGBTQ youth are at even greater risk for being pushed out of school and into the criminal/juvenile justice system. African American, Latino/a, and Multiracial students experienced higher rates of school discipline and were more likely to believe they might not complete high school. Transgender students and cisgender gender nonconforming LGBQ students were also more likely to have experienced school discipline and to believe they might not graduate high school, as well as more likely to be involved in the justice system as a result of school discipline. LGBTQ youth who were homeless and LGBTQ youth with disabilities also had higher rates of school discipline, dropping out, and school discipline-related justice involvement. Therefore, as schools develop policies and practices to keep LGBTQ youth in school, they must also pay particular attention to assessing and addressing disparities faced by other groups of traditionally marginalized youth.

In spite of the pervasive barriers that often limit LGBTQ youth's access to an equal education, there are clear remedies for these exclusionary policies and practices, and many schools and districts have begun to implement them. Supportive personnel, critical to improving the overall school climate for LGBTQ youth and instrumental in advocating on behalf of individual LGBTQ students, have steadily become more prevalent over the past decade.[138] A number of school administrators across the country have begun to assess the appropriateness and the impact of exclusionary disciplinary policies on their students. For example, in 2014 the Los Angeles Unified School District ceased bringing criminal sanctions for low level offenses committed by students, such as alcohol and tobacco possession, and instead now refers students to school counselors or administrators.[139] The public is becoming more supportive of less punitive juvenile justice approaches as well. A national public opinion poll found that approximately two-thirds of respondents favored schools handling minor offenses such as truancy and damaging school property over involving the juvenile justice system.[140] Educator practices in the classroom are also gradually changing as some educators move away from exclusionary, discipline-heavy policies and practices and begin to adopt approaches that focus on keeping students in school and engaged in learning.[141] Thus, whether on the part of educators, advocates, or policy makers, schools are changing, but more work remains to be done.

Below, we offer several recommendations for schools to create safer, more supportive, more inclusive, and less exclusionary learning environments for LGBTQ and all youth, including: the development of responsive teacher practices; an assessment of existing school policies, the fostering a non-punitive school cultures, and the advancement of a national agenda addressing disparities and the use of discipline in schools.

IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE AND UNBIASED SCHOOL POLICIES

School policies are often designed to structure social interactions within the school, maintain order in the classroom, and facilitate learning for students. When students violate these policies, they are frequently subject to disciplinary action, which can include, at times, their removal from the school. Unfortunately, schools sometimes employ policies excessively and in ways that do not support student learning. As findings from this report suggest, schools commonly employ policies, intentionally or not, that disproportionately and negatively affect LGBTQ students—the majority of LGBTQ students said they had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school and those who had were more likely to have been disciplined as well as have lower educational aspirations. School administrators and teachers should examine their school policies and classroom practices to ensure that LGBTQ students are not negatively affected, and moreover, to assess whether all students are given the opportunity to learn at school. States and school districts also should adopt non-discrimination policies and incorporate sexual orientation and gender identity/expression into existing anti-bullying/harassment and non-discrimination policies to foster school environments where all students are treated equitably. Districts and schools may want to explore the use of model policies provided by their state departments of education or organizations like GLSEN, such as our model anti-bullying policy and model policy related to transgender and gender nonconforming students.

As attention to bullying and harassment has increased in recent years, schools have implemented policies seeking to define, prevent, and address victimization incidents when they occur. Although it is laudable when schools take these incidents seriously and help all students feel safe and protected in schools, it is also important that these policies do not contribute further to the school-to-prison pipeline by mandating harsh discipline for all infractions through zero-tolerance types of policies. Research suggests that exclusionary discipline strategies are associated with more disorderly classrooms and lower engagement and trust with the teacher, and thus, may be counterproductive to learning.[142] Therefore, we strongly discourage the use of zero-tolerance policies and recommend giving more authority and discretion to educators and school personnel in addressing school discipline, and support the use of exclusionary discipline only for the most serious of infractions, if at all. However,

given that discretion may also be employed to discipline some students at disproportionate rates, schools should have systems in place to ensure that discipline policies are applied equitably. Schools should examine their anti-bullying/harassment policies to ensure that they do not mandate classroom removal for all infractions, perhaps except in the most serious cases when students' safety is at risk. Rather, schools should employ graduated approaches that take into account the seriousness of the offense in order to keep students in school whenever possible, and they should instruct students fully on school policies and the consequences for breaking them.[143]

Disciplinary actions on the part of the school will likely remain a necessary tool in some cases. Ignoring dangerous incidents or not disciplining students when warranted is not likely to solve underlying behavior issues, and would simply exchange one problem (the potential for overuse or inequitable use of discipline) for another (not intervening and/or potentially failing to ensure safe learning environments for students). Educators should take steps to ensure that students who are disciplined have access to learning opportunities, and that if removal from the classroom is a necessary component of the discipline, they are reintegrated into regular classroom environments following the disciplinary response as soon as possible.

BUILD SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS THAT VALUE ALL STUDENTS' LEARNING

The use of overly harsh discipline and the persistent negative school climate experienced by some students represent a failure to value and support all students' learning. When some students are treated differently than others, experience the school as less safe than others, or experience persistently worse outcomes than others, schools have broken their commitment to providing an education for all students. Because of the negative school climate experienced by many LGBTQ students, support from educators and administrators can play an important role in making schools better and more welcoming for LGBTQ youth.

Staff members function in a number of ways to show support for LGBTQ students and keep them in school. In schools where LGBTQ students are more supported and accepted, LGBTQ students may be seen as less of a risk of "disruption", and thus, less subject to disciplinary reproach. Educators who employ culturally responsive teaching and are aware of the needs of their students may help their students feel more engaged, increasing their academic achievement, and educational aspirations and attainment.[144] Specifically, when educators incorporate LGBTQ people and topics into their teaching, LGBTQ students are more likely to be engaged in school—prior research demonstrates that they are less likely to skip school and feel more connected to their school community.[145] In addition, schools that foster a supportive environment convey that the success of all students is important and help to keep students in school.

Individual educators can also play a direct role in LGBTQ students' lives. For instance, individual staff members may serve as the inspiration for school-wide measures to create safer schools (e.g., implementing inclusive policies), and they model behavior for other educators and students when they serve as a resource for LGBTQ students and treat them with respect. Schools' administration are also critical for creating a supportive environment for LGBTQ youth, and each can take steps to build a more supportive environment. As is detailed in the recommendations related to policies discussed in the previous section, administrators can be instrumental in ensuring that policies are applied fairly and non-punitively and by supporting teachers and students to be respectful of all students.[146]

DEVELOP AND SUPPORT RESPONSIVE TEACHER PRACTICES

As teachers have the most contact with students and are often tasked with implementing school policies, they serve a key role in improving the school environment and keeping students in school. In addition to proactively implementing responsive teaching practices and engaging in LGBTQ-supportive efforts, educators can also take steps to improve the school response to student behavior issues. Educators are instrumental in responding to incidents that threaten the safety

of students and the learning environment, but it is important that they do so in ways that are not needlessly punitive.

Intervene in Bullying Incidents Effectively

Because LGBTQ students experience higher rates of victimization at school than non-LGBTQ youth, they are at greater risk of being subject to schools' disciplinary protocols related to peer victimization incidents. Our findings indicated that some LGBTQ students were disciplined themselves when they reported harassment or assault. Unresponsive and ineffective intervention may be associated with higher rates of discipline among LGBTQ youth. Thus, it is crucial that schools develop fair means of addressing bullying incidents and intervene effectively when these incidents occur, in ways that do not blame LGBTQ students, or any student, for their own victimization.

Employ Restorative Teaching Practices

When teachers intervene in behavioral infractions and incidents of harassment, it is not only important that they do so effectively, but that they do not use forms of discipline that are excessive relative to the infraction that occurred. One approach for reducing the use of discipline in the classroom involves using alternative teacher strategies when infractions do occur. Recent research and practice suggest a number of alternatives to harsh discipline and classroom removal when infractions occur in the classroom, including restorative justice and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), as described below.[147]

In restorative justice models, rather than simply punishing the perpetrator and removing them from the classroom, the individual takes responsibility for the infraction and understands its impact on others, as well as takes action to correct the issue and prevent it from occurring again in the future.[148] In essence, the focus of restorative models is on acknowledging and rebuilding relationships among the different parties involved in an incident. Such approaches have been linked with reduced use of discipline as well as with narrowed gaps in discipline sanctions between typically marginalized groups of students.[149] Other restorative strategies emphasize supportive relationships between teachers and students rather than discipline; these have been found to

reduce discipline gaps as well.[150] Circle models are another restorative approach in which school community members involved or affected by infractions come together in a circle to discuss the situation and work together toward a solution.[151] These models, which seek buy in from students, educators, and even parents, have been used not only for prevention, to foster trust and relationships in the school environment, and to build community, but also to assess the impact and consequences of wrongdoing and infractions.[152] Restorative justice approaches do seem to share some similarities with peer mediation models, in which students speak to one another about an incident, and which can be harmful if they fail to address social power imbalances and implicate all students equally in an incident. To date, the use of these restorative approaches have not been examined among LGBTQ youth specifically. Thus, although some of these practices have been found to reduce racial discipline disparities, it is unclear how they might apply specifically to LGBTQ youth and/or reduce any discipline gaps between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth. Nevertheless, given that these approaches appear to be effective in limiting disciplinary sanctions, and in some cases, curbing discipline disparities with other marginalized groups, they may be promising practices to help address LGBTQ push-out, drop-out, and involvement in school-to-prison pipeline. However, future research should assess the effectiveness of restorative practices in addressing incidents involving anti-LGBTQ bias and consider how they can best be used with incidents involving LGBTQ youth.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, is a framework in which appropriate student behaviors are emphasized and rewarded via positive feedback, thus reducing the need for disciplinary approaches over time. However, whereas they have been shown to reduce overall discipline rates, they do not necessarily reduce discipline gaps between some students, such as between Black/African American and White students.[153] Thus, they may fail to address the issues that underlie racial disparities, such as discretionary use of discipline when minor infractions do occur. As with restorative justice, there is no information about how well this approach works with LGBTQ youth or in

addressing anti-LGBT behaviors. Future research should examine the effectiveness of PBIS in addressing discipline disparities for LGBTQ youth, along with other youth disproportionately represented in the school-to-prison pipeline, such as Black/African American youth, Latino youth, and youth with disabilities.

ASSESS THE USE OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

In response to school violence, and as part of a general trend of surveillance in schools, many schools now employ school resource officers (SROs), police officers, or other security personnel in schools.[154] The responsibilities of such personnel vary among states and across schools, but they are often used when victimization occurs, and in some districts they serve as a direct link to a local police department.[155] Thus, SROs have been lauded as a possible means of creating safer school environments, but their critics have pointed out the role that they play in removing students from the school environment, perhaps excessively and for relatively minor offenses (i.e., disorderly conduct).[156] School security measures overall have been found to be related to higher suspension rates, even after accounting for behavioral infractions, and are also more likely to be found in schools with high compositions of racial/ethnic minorities.[157] Some research suggests that SROs display varying knowledge of bullying policies, which may be associated with differential enforcement and intervention with regard to different types of students and in different types of schools.[158]

SROs might be particularly ineffective in addressing incidents related to LGBTQ youth. Recent scholarship has found SROs and several other surveillance measures to have no impact on the rates of homophobic bullying.[159] Other research has focused on the personal interaction between school security officers and LGBTQ students.[160] For example, a 2012 study by Lambda Legal found that security officers, mainly appointed to protect students, may have actually contributed to a hostile or indifferent climate for LGBTQ students. Fourteen percent of all survey respondents said that the attitudes of school security officers toward them were hostile. Larger percentages of transgender and gender non-

conforming respondents (20%) and transgender gender non-conforming respondents of color (28%) described the attitude of security toward them as "hostile." Nearly 15% of transgender and gender non-conforming respondents with security and/or police in their schools reported that they were verbally assaulted by those security personnel.

Schools should assess the practices of SROs and their utility to determine whether they would improve the school climate. If SROs are present in a school, administrators should take steps to ensure that SROs are informed on school policies and how to address the needs of LGBTQ youth . Furthermore, organizations such as the National Association of School Resource Officers should consider providing training and guidance to SROs to ensure they are equipped to effectively respond to anti-LGBTQ incidents and to treat LGBTQ youth respectfully and fairly.

EMPLOY MEASURES TO SUPPORT COMPLETION OF HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

Students who do not complete high school have greater negative outcomes, such as limited career opportunities, higher poverty, poorer health, and greater involvement in the criminal justice system.[161] Therefore, it is critical that students who drop out of high school, or are pushed into the justice system, are provided with opportunities to complete their high school education—either through compensatory schooling or through diploma-equivalent certifications, such as GED (General Education Development).

In order to ensure that LGBTQ youth have access to these opportunities, services that provide GED courses and tutoring must be safe and affirming for LGBTQ youth. These services should implement LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination policies and provide professional development to increase staff's LGBTQ competency. Furthermore, LGBTQ youth centers and other LGBTQ youth support organizations should provide GED courses and tutoring to LGBTQ youth who have dropped out of school when possible.

Students with repeated and/or serious infractions at school might be transferred to "alternative" schools which are schools designed for students who have a difficult time succeeding in regular

schools. These schools must employ measures to ensure that LGBTQ youth are safe and welcome, including inclusive anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies, LGBT-inclusive curriculum, support for student clubs such as Gay-Straight Alliances, and visible staff support for LGBTQ students. These measures are recommended for all school settings, but given that LGBTQ students enrolled in alternative schools often ended up there as a result of a damaging and hostile climate in their previous school, it is even more important that these supportive measures are in place in alternative-type schools.

Lastly, for LGBTQ youth who do end up in juvenile justice facilities, it is essential that they have the opportunity to receive a quality education. These institutions should provide opportunities to complete high school, as well as options to receive a GED. Yet there is mounting evidence that juvenile correctional facilities can be hostile places for LGBTQ youth—LGBTQ youth tend to be treated more harshly by authorities,[162] experience disproportionate rates of abuse from other inmates,[163-164] and often lack supportive resources.[165] In order to ensure that incarcerated LGBTQ youth are able to access educational courses and resources, juvenile facilities must implement practices and policies that create safe and equitable environments. For example, the Juvenile Justice Project of the Correctional Association of NY provided research-based and youth-informed recommendations through its LGBTQ Working Group that resulted in policy changes such as requiring staff to refer to transgender youth by their preferred name and pronoun.[166]

SUPPORT A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONWIDE AGENDA

As advocates and schools increasingly address push out, drop out, and the school-to-prison pipeline among their students, there is also a need for a coordinated, systematic approach to transform educational environments across the country. Federal efforts are necessary, but as the responsibility of educating our youth rests predominately with the states, it is important to engage in efforts at the state-level as well.

Advocate for Federal Policy Addressing LGBTQ Youth

Several types of policy and legislative changes could be instrumental in improving the academic environment for LGBTQ youth and protecting them from dropping out or being removed from school. The Student Nondiscrimination Act, or SNDA, would prohibit discrimination in schools on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, in addition to protections that currently exist for students, such as race, religion, and disability.[167] Additionally, the Safe School Improvement Act, or SSIA, would require states to pass anti-bullying policies that prohibit harassment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression and help ensure that schools have appropriate mechanisms for dealing with such harassment.[168] Several organizations have called on Congress to include protections for LGBTQ youth as it considers reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), which has been due for reauthorization since 2007.[169] These legislative approaches would help encourage schools to implement more inclusive policies and would also provide necessary guidance to ensure that their policies and practices contribute minimally to push out, drop out, and the STPP.

Support and Enforce Title IX Provisions

Federal education law protects students from sex discrimination under Title IX.[170] This law has been increasingly applied to experiences of bullying, harassment, and discrimination based upon students' sexual orientation. And in 2016, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education jointly released specific guidance to schools and districts clearly stating that discrimination based on transgender status is in violation of Title IX and detailing school's specific responsibilities to ensure transgender students' rights are protected.[171] As such, schools should be aware that discrimination of LGBTQ youth, such as differential treatment for public displays of affection or preventing transgender students from using facilities that match their gender (i.e., school bathrooms), would violate Title IX and risk schools losing federal funding. They should ensure that school policies and educator practices are in compliance with the law and provide notification to school personnel, students, and families about students' rights

under Title IX. As a resource, GLSEN provides model policies on bullying/harassment and transgender students that conform to Title IX and can be adopted by local schools and districts.[172] Furthermore, schools should provide notification to students and families about their rights and the mechanisms for filing complaints if students' rights are violated.[173] Advocates should continue to raise awareness about the Title IX obligations and to support full implementation of its guidelines in schools and local districts.

Advocate for State Policy That Addresses Limiting Exclusionary Discipline in Education
Recognizing the need to reform disciplinary procedures and keep students in school, California, Colorado, Maryland, and New York have recently passed policies and legislation that severely curtail use of suspension and expulsion for minor infractions such as defiance or disruption.[174] Advocates in these states should ensure these policies are effectively implemented at the district level and those in other states should work to enact similar statewide policies.

Improve Data Collection to Understand LGBTQ Youth and School-to-Prison Pipeline
There is a continued need to collect data on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression in federal research and other nationally representative studies, as well as collect data on the disciplinary experiences of students in surveys that do already assess sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. The current presidential administration has taken strides to collect better data on the educational experiences of LGBTQ youth, but these efforts are largely limited to anti-LGBT bullying.[175] Whereas the federal and state Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) collect information on sexual orientation, they do not include survey items about school discipline. One of the few studies to examine both the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) and LGBQ-related disparities relied on nationally representative data gathered from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health conducted by the federal government.[176] However, this data permitted analysis only with regard to sexual orientation/identity but not gender identity or gender expression. Furthermore, to our knowledge, no studies to date have evaluated the utility of specific approaches in helping reduce

the use of discipline specifically among LGBTQ students. Thus, there remain large gaps in our understanding of push out, drop out, and the STPP among LGBTQ youth. Collecting such data will permit a more complete understanding of the general youth population, including youth who identify as LGBTQ, as well as comparisons between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth.

In addition to state and federal data collection, local districts and schools should use the data already available to them to better understand their own disciplinary practices, including whether they are applied appropriately and equitably across student populations, and the outcomes of students who are referred to the courts and justice system for school-based incidents.[177] Administrators, educators, and even students could also collect their own data about students' experiences to better understand trends and disparities among students in their schools or communities. For example, schools could use GLSEN's *Local School Climate Survey* (LSCS),[178] a free, online tool for school staff or students to create and administer a customized school climate survey in their local school or district.

Train Current and Future School Personnel on Alternative Discipline Approaches
Although a number of classroom approaches have been demonstrated to reduce the use of discipline and help lessen discipline disparities, their use is not yet widespread, and many educators may require further professional development to implement them successfully. California's recent funding commitment to restorative justice and PBIS approaches acknowledges the importance of training in their success.[179] In addition, as schools continue to turn to school resource officers (SROs) to address school safety and security issues, districts and administrators need to ensure that SROs fully understand their schools' policies and apply them equally to all students. Additional and more comprehensive training for all school personnel will help equip them to address bullying and other incidents in ways that do not require exclusionary discipline—approaches that potentially require more time, skill, and attention, but ultimately may promote the best outcomes for the largest number of students.[180] Furthermore, currently very few educators receive any training on addressing LGBTQ student issues or on

anti-LGBTQ bullying.[181] Pre-service training should incorporate comprehensive approaches to ensure educators are capable of effectively responding to LGBTQ students' needs and combating anti-LGBTQ bias in their schools.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

This report fills an important gap in our knowledge of the experiences of LGBTQ youth. Although we provide a broad perspective of the experiences of LGBTQ students with respect to push out, drop out, and the school-to-prison pipeline, more can be learned about the factors that result in LGBTQ students' absence from the school context. One gap that remains involves disparities between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth. We presented some preliminary findings on comparisons in school discipline in this report, but very little research to date has collected information both on school discipline/justice system involvement and youths' sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Therefore, it is vital that researchers collect additional data among the general youth population to examine disparities between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth in drop out, push out, and STPP factors. To allow for more in-depth examination of this issue for all youth, national, population-based surveys, such as the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey and surveys conducted by the Department of Education, should include both questions about disciplinary experiences and questions about sexual orientation and gender identity.[182]

There has been little longitudinal research on LGBTQ youth, and thus, we have a lack of understanding about pathways from school to numerous negative life outcomes, including drop out and involvement in the justice system. Undertaking longitudinal research on these topics would also help illuminate the factors at school, including a lack of safety and discrimination that may put LGBTQ youth at greater risk of these negative outcomes.

This report examined several demographic differences in push out, drop out, and justice involvement. Future research should examine differences with attention to additional factors, including intersections among sexual orientation, gender identity, and other characteristics of LGBTQ youth. For instance, we examined gender and racial differences separately and found that transgender youth and students of color were at particular risk for discipline, but future research should examine the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity as they relate to school discipline. In most cases, limited numbers of these specific subgroups did not permit this kind of analysis in this report.

Finally, it is important that future research examine interventions to reduce the use of discipline in schools with specific attention to LGBTQ youth. Overall, research on interventions to reduce the use of discipline and to diminish discipline gaps, such as restorative justice approaches, has only recently emerged. Scholars should assess whether these approaches are effective in reducing the discipline gaps between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ youth. Furthermore, research on interventions specifically designed to improve school climate and well-being for LGBTQ youth, such as LGBTQ-inclusive curricula and professional development for school staff, should examine whether their potential benefits extend to keeping LGBTQ youth in school and out of the criminal/juvenile justice system.

Together, these recommendations offer strategies from the local to the national level to reduce push out, drop out, and forces that push LGBTQ youth into the school-to-prison pipeline. They offer guidance to help educators more intentionally consider the use of discipline in their classrooms and work to reduce discipline gaps among different groups of students. Furthermore, they call for research to help understand the effectiveness of potential approaches to reduce the disparities for LGBTQ youth. Findings from this report demonstrate that the current educational environment for LGBTQ students is unacceptable and unsustainable if schools are to prepare the next generation of citizens to address the nation's diverse challenges. It is imperative that schools act to improve hostile climates and end harsh and unfair disciplinary practices. These recommendations will help to create more welcoming and supportive environments for LGBTQ students, and all students alike.

Notes and References

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29   They engaged in slightly more mild and moderate, but not violent transgressive behaviors. See Himmelstein & Brückner, 2011, below.

30   Defined by same-sex attraction, same-sex relationships, and/or LGB self-identification

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35   Cisgender" describes a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex/gender they were assigned at birth.

36   Race/ethnicity was assessed with a multi-check question item (i.e., African American or Black; Asian; South Asian; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native; White or Caucasian; Hispanic or Latino/a; and Middle Eastern or Arab American) with an optional write-in item for races/ethnicities not listed. Participants who selected more than one category were coded as "Multiracial," with the exception of participants who selected "Hispanic or Latino" or "Middle Eastern or Arab American."

37   Gender was assessed with a multi-check question item (i.e., male, female, transgender, transgender male-to-female, transgender female-to-male, and genderqueer) with an optional write-in item for genders not listed in combination with an item that asked respondents their sex assigned at birth. Participants in the Transgender Female category selected "male-to-female" and/or selected "female," "transgender," and indicated that they were assigned male at birth; the category Transgender Male was calculated similarly. Participants

were categorized as having Another Transgender Identity if they selected only "transgender" and provided no other information about their gender identities, if they selected both "male-to-female" and "female-to-male" transgender options, or if they selected both "male" and "female" and also indicated "transgender," regardless of birth sex.

38   Sexual orientation was assessed with a multi-check question item (i.e., gay, lesbian, straight/heterosexual, bisexual, questioning, and queer) with an optional write-in item for sexual orientations not listed. Students in the categories Queer, Another Sexual Orientation, and Questioning or Unsure did not also indicate that they were gay/lesbian or bisexual.

39   "Bisexual" and "pansexual" both describe the sexual orientations of people who can experience attraction to people of multiple gender identities. Bisexual identity is commonly described as either experiencing attraction to some male-identified people and some female-identified people or as experiencing attraction to some people of the same gender and some people of different genders. Pansexual identity is commonly defined as experiencing attraction to some people, regardless of their gender identities.

40   Students were placed into region based on the state they were from – Northeast: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, DC; South: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia; Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin; West: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

41   School locale (urban, suburban, rural) was created by matching school district locale information from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) with the school district name and/or zip code provided by participants attending public schools.

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48   Findings in this study came from online survey conducted by Harris Poll on behalf of GLSEN among 1,367 U.S. junior/senior high school students age 13–18. The national sample was drawn primarily from the Harris Poll Online (HPOL) opt-in panel and supplemented with a sample from trusted partner panels. The data from the online surveys were weighted to key demographic variables to align with the national student population.

49   To compare disciplinary experiences between LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students, five chi-square tests were conducted. *Sent to Principal's Office:* $\chi^2 = 14.818$, *df = 1, p < .01*, Cramer's V = .083; *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 9.507$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .104; *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 13.020$, *df = 1, p < .001*, *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 0.330$, *df = 1, p > .05*, Cramer's V = .016, Cramer's V = .1098, *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 = 300.075$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .197. All difference were significant except for being expelled from school.

50   *From Teasing to Torment 2016*: "Now we would like to ask you some questions about getting in trouble at school. Have you ever …? Please select all that apply." (response options included: Been referred to the principal's office; Received detention; Been suspended from school [in-school or out-of-school suspension]; Been expelled from school; I have not experienced any of these). *2013 National School Climate Survey*: "As a result of disciplinary action at school, have you ever …? Please check all that apply." (response options: Received detention; Been suspended from school [in-school or out-of-school suspension];Been expelled from school; Been arrested; Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court; Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility). Note: responses indicating criminal or juvenile justice involvement (e.g., been arrested) are reported in the Justice Involvement section of this report.

51   Snapp, S. D., Hoenig, J. M., Fields, A., & Russell, S. T. (2014). Messy, butch, and queer: LGBTQ youth and the school-to-prison pipeline. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 30*, 57–82.

52   Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Palmer, N. A., & Boesen, M. J. (2014). *The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York: GLSEN.

53   High and low levels of victimization are indicated by a cutoff at the mean score of victimization: students above the mean were characterized as "Experiencing Higher Levels of Victimization."

54   To compare disciplinary experiences by severity of victimization based on sexual orientation, four chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced higher than average victimization. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 248.521$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .179. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have received detention than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 300.348$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .197. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have been suspended than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 38.506$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .071. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have been expelled than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 = 300.075$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .197. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization.

To compare disciplinary experiences by severity of victimization based on gender expression, four chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced higher than average victimization. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 177.509$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .153. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have received detention than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 174.800$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .152. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have been suspended than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 20.550$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .052. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have been expelled than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 = 189.314$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .158. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization.

55   To compare disciplinary experiences by missing school due to safety reasons, four chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had missed school at least once due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 253.641$, *df = 1, p < .001*, Cramer's V = .181. Students who had missed school were more likely to have received detention than students who had not missed school.

Been suspended from school: $\chi^2 = 215.703$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .167. Students who had missed school were more likely to have been suspended than students who had not missed school. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 43.443$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .075. Students who had missed school were more likely to have been expelled than students who had not missed school. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 = 261.865$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .184. Students who had missed school reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than students who had not missed school.

56   Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). *The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

57   To compare experiences of discrimination by gender identity, three chi-square tests were conducted. *Prevented from using preferred name:* $\chi^2 = 1081.560$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .383. Transgender students were most likely to experience this form of discrimination, followed by genderqueer and other gender students, followed by cisgender females, followed by cisgender males. *Required to use bathroom/locker room of legal sex:* $\chi^2 = 1096.869$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .385. Transgender students were most likely to experience this form of discrimination, followed by genderqueer and other gender students, followed by cisgender females, followed by cisgender males. *Prevented from wearing clothes of another gender (dress code violation):* $\chi^2 = 164.255$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .149. Transgender, other gender, and genderqueer students were more likely to experience this form of discrimination than cisgender males and females, who were not different from one another. Transgender students were also more likely to experience this form of discrimination than genderqueer students. Other gender students were not different from transgender and genderqueer students in experiencing this form of discrimination.

58   To compare disciplinary experiences by experiences of discrimination at school, four chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced discriminatory policies or procedures described in the section Experiences of Discrimination at School, not including being punished for PDA or for identifying as LGBT. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 181.867$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .153. Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school were more likely to have received detention than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 132.932$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .131. Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school were more likely to have been suspended than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 21.492$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .053. Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school were more likely to have been expelled than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 =$

206.412, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .163. Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. Note further analyses demonstrated that these relationships between discriminatory practices and school discipline held even after controlling for peer victimization.

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68 High and low levels of victimization are indicated by a cutoff at the mean score of victimization: students above the mean were characterized as "Experiencing Higher Levels of Victimization."

69 To test differences in dropping out by severity of victimization, two chi-square tests were conducted. *Severity of victimization based on sexual orientation:* $\chi^2 = 100.153$, *df* = 1, *p* < .001, Cramer's V = .114. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation were less likely to say they planned to graduate from high school. *Severity of victimization based on gender expression:* $\chi^2 = 102.046$, *df* = 1, *p* < .001, Cramer's V = .116. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization based on gender expression were less likely to say they planned to graduate from high school.

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71 The relationship between missing school and severity of victimization was examined through Pearson correlations. *Victimization based on sexual orientation:* r = .531, *p* < .001; *Victimization based on gender expression:* r = .401, *p* < .001. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes.

72 To test differences in missing school by experiencing discriminatory policies and practices at school, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with missing school as the dependent variable, and experiencing discrimination as the independent variable. The main effect for experiencing discrimination was significant: $F(1, 7050) = 663.883$, *p* < 0.001, $\eta p^2 = .086$. Percentages are shown for illustrative purposes. Note further analyses demonstrated that these relationships between discriminatory practices and missing school held even after controlling for peer victimization.

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76 To examine whether mental health was related to plans to drop out, a binary logistic regression was conducted with the two mental health variables (depression—assessed by CES-D scale) and self-esteem assessed through the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (see Kosciw et al., 2013 for more information) as predictors and the dichotomous variable of planning to drop out (or not sure if would drop out) as the outcome. The model was significant: $\chi^2 = 201.984$, df = 2, *p* < .001. The coefficients for both predictor variables were significant: depression: β = 0.721, p < .001; self-esteem: β = - 1.094, p < .001.

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79   To test differences in educational aspirations by experiences of school discipline, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students did not plan to graduate from high school: $\chi^2 = 15.726$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .045. Students who had been disciplined at school were less likely to plan to graduate from high school compared to students who had not been disciplined at school.

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89   High and low levels of victimization are indicated by a cutoff at the mean score of victimization: students above the mean were characterized as "Experiencing Higher Levels of Victimization."

90   To compare involvement in the justice system due to school discipline by severity of victimization based on sexual orientation, four chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced higher than average victimization. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* $\chi^2 = 61.957$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .090. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have appeared before a court than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Been arrested:* $\chi^2 = 45.853$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .077. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have been arrested than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* $\chi^2 = 25.455$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .057. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have served time in a detention facility than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Experienced any of these*

forms of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system: $\chi^2 = 84.752$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .105. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization reported higher rates of involvement with the justice system than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization.

To compare involvement in the justice system due to school discipline by severity of victimization based on gender expression, four chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had experienced higher than average victimization. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* $\chi^2 = 23.672$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .056. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have appeared before a court than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Been arrested:* $\chi^2 = 18.436$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .049. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have been arrested than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* $\chi^2 = 7.326$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .031. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization were more likely to have served time in a detention facility than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization. *Experienced any of these forms of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system:* $\chi^2 = 34.572$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .068. Students who had experienced higher levels of victimization reported higher rates of involvement with the justice system than students who had experienced lower levels of victimization.

91   Snapp, S. D., Hoenig, J. M., Fields, A., & Russell, S. T. (2014). Messy, butch, and queer: LGBTQ youth and the school-to-prison pipeline. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 30*, 57–82.

92   To compare involvement in the justice system due to school discipline by missing school due to safety reasons, four chi-square tests were conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students had missed school at least once due to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* $\chi^2 = 38.175$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .070. Students who had missed school were more likely to have appeared before a court than students who had not missed school. *Been arrested:* $\chi^2 = 27.254$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .059. Students who had missed school were more likely to have been arrested than students who had not missed school. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* $\chi^2 = 30.660$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .063. Students who had missed school were more likely to have served time in a detention facility than students who had not missed school. *Experienced any of these forms of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system:* $\chi^2 = 52.990$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .083. Students who had missed school reported higher rates of involvement with the justice system than students who had not missed school.

93   To compare disciplinary experiences by experiences of discrimination at school, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* $\chi^2 = 21.144$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .052.

Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school were more likely to have appeared before a juvenile or criminal court than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. *Been arrested:* $\chi^2 = 27.237$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .059. Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school were more likely to have been arrested than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* $\chi^2 = 22.418$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .054. Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school were more likely to have served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. *Experienced any of these types of disciplinary action:* $\chi^2 = 37.477$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .070. Students who had experienced discriminatory policies or practices at school were more likely to have experienced any of these types of disciplinary action than students who had not experienced these policies or practices. Note further analyses demonstrated that these relationships between discriminatory practices and justice involvement held even after controlling for peer victimization.

94   Rates of suspension and expulsion for this sample of LGBTQ youth were slightly lower than the general youth population. For example, 15.1% of the LGBTQ sample said they had ever been suspended, compared to 21.6% of the NCES sample; 1.3% of the LGBTQ sample had been expelled, compared to 3.2% of the NCES sample. However, this sample of LGBTQ youth included only those who were in school in the past school year, whereas values on the general youth population come from a query of parents, and thus report on all youth, and a different viewpoint. Thus, this sample of LGBTQ youth likely underestimates rates of disciplinary experiences, including suspension and expulsion, for LGBT youth, as many such youth may no longer be in school.

95   Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Palmer, N. A., & Boesen, M. J. (2014). *The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

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105 Given the relatively small sample sizes of Middle Eastern/Arab American and Native American/American Indian LGBT students and LGBT students with "other" races/ethnicities, we did not include these three groups in the comparisons of school experiences by race or ethnicity.

106 Anyon, Y., Jenson, J. M., Altschul, I., Farrar, J., McQueen, J., Greer, E., Downing, B., & Simmons, J. (2014). The persistent effect of race and the promise of alternatives to suspension in school discipline outcomes. *Children and Youth Services Review, 44,* 379-386.

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107 Tajalli, H., & Garba, H. A. (2014). Discipline or prejudice? Overrepresentation of minority students in disciplinary alternative education programs. *The Urban Review, 46*(4), 620-631.

108 To compare disciplinary experiences by race/ethnicity, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 43.717$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .078. Hispanic/Latino and Multiracial students were more likely to have received detention than White/European American students and Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students. Black/African American students were also more likely to have received detention than White/European American students, but were not different from Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students. *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 46.821$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .081. Black/African American and Multiracial students were more likely to have been suspended than Hispanic/Latino, White/European American, and Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 16.200$, $df = 4$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .047. Multiracial students were more likely to have been expelled than Hispanic/Latino and White/European American students. Black/African American and Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students were not different from Multiracial, Hispanic/Latino, or White/European American students. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 = 53.359$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .086. Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, and Multiracial students reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than White/European American and Asian/South Asian/Pacific Islander students. Note further analyses demonstrated that these differences remained even after controlling for school characteristics, such as locale (urban, rural, suburban), type (public, religious, private non-religion) and region (Northeast, South, Midwest, West).

109 To compare disciplinary experiences by school racial composition, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 49.929$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .084. Youth of color in schools predominantly of students of color of a different race were more likely to have received detention, followed by youth of color in predominantly White schools. White students in predominantly White schools and White students in schools predominantly of students of color were least likely to have received detention. *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 37.310$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .072. White students in predominantly White schools were less likely to have been suspended than all other students, who were not different from one another. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 17.504$, $df = 5$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .050. Youth of color in predominantly White schools, youth of color in schools

predominantly of students of color of their race/ethnicity, and White students in schools predominantly of students of color were more likely to have been expelled than White students in predominantly White schools. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* χ^2 = 58.534, *df* = 5, *p* < .001, Cramer's V = .091. Youth of color in schools predominantly of their race/ethnicity and youth of color in predominantly White schools reported the highest rates of school disciplinary action, followed by youth of color in schools predominantly of students of color of a different race and White students in schools predominantly of students of color. White students in predominantly White schools reported the lowest rates of school disciplinary action.

110   To test differences in dropping out by race/ethnicity, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students did not plan to graduate from high school or were not sure: χ^2 = 10.785, *df* = 4, *p* < .05, Cramer's V = .039. Multiracial students were marginally significant different from Black/African-American students, and were significantly different from all other students. There were no differences between other racial/ethnic groups. Note further analyses demonstrated that these differences remained even after controlling for school characteristics, such as locale (urban, rural, suburban), type (public, religious, private non-religion) and region (Northeast, South, Midwest, West).

111   To compare disciplinary experiences in justice involvement resulting from school discipline by race/ethnicity, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* χ^2 = 2.198, *df* = 4, *p* > .10, Cramer's V = .017. Students did not differ from one another by race/ethnicity in their rates of having appeared before a court. *Been arrested:* χ^2 = 4.295, *df* = 4, *p* > .10, Cramer's V = .024. Students did not differ from one another by race/ethnicity in their rates of having been arrested. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* χ^2 = 2.135, *df* = 4, *p* > .10, Cramer's V = .017. Students did not differ from one another by race/ethnicity in their rates of having served time in a detention facility. *Experienced any of these forms of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system:* χ^2 = 3.083, *df* = 4, *p* > .10, Cramer's V = .021. Students did not differ from one another by race/ethnicity in their overall contact with the justice system. Note further analyses demonstrated that there were no differences in justice involvement as result of school discipline, even after controlling for school characteristics, such as locale (urban, rural, suburban), type (public, religious, private non-religion) and region (Northeast, South, Midwest, West).

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114   Burdge, H., Hyemingway, Z. T., Licona, A. C. (2014). *Gender nonconforming youth: Discipline disparities, school push-out, and the school-to-prison pipeline.* San Francisco, CA: Gay-Straight Alliance Network and Tucson, AZ: Crossroads Collaborative at the University of Arizona.

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115   To compare disciplinary experiences by gender identity, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Received detention:* χ^2 = 26.474, *df* = 4, *p* < .001, Cramer's V = .060. Transgender and other gender students were more likely to have received detention than genderqueer, cisgender male, and cisgender female students. *Been suspended from school:* χ^2 = 21.352, *df* = 4, *p* < .05, Cramer's V = .054. Transgender and other gender students were more likely to have been suspended than genderqueer, cisgender male, and cisgender female students. *Been expelled from school:* χ^2 = 9.684, *df* = 4, *p* < .05, Cramer's V = .036. Other gender students were more likely to have been expelled than genderqueer, cisgender male, and cisgender female students; transgender students were not different from other students. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* χ^2 = 27.914, *df* = 4, *p* < .001, Cramer's V = .061. Transgender and other gender students reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than genderqueer, cisgender male, and cisgender female students.

To test differences in disciplinary experiences among transgender youth, a chi-square test was conducted with the composite measure of experiencing any form of school discipline with additional transgender categories: χ^2 = 32.720, *df* = 6, *p* < .001, Cramer's V = .066. Transgender females reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than transgender males, but were not different from other transgender students or students

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with "another" gender identity. Transgender females were not different from transgender youth with "another" transgender identity, or from genderqueer youth or youth with "another" gender identity.

116   To test differences in dropping out by gender identity, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students did not plan to graduate from high school or were not sure: $\chi^2 = 85.146$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .107. Cisgender students (both male and female) were less likely than other three groups (transgender, genderqueer, and students with another gender identity) to plan not to graduate high school. There were no differences between male and female cisgender students, and there were no differences among the non-cisgender students.

To test differences in plans to complete high school among transgender youth, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students did not plan to graduate from high school or were not sure: $\chi^2 = 1.447$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$, Cramer's V = .045. Transgender males, transgender females, and non-binary transgender students did not significant differ from one another.

117   To compare justice involvement due to school discipline by gender identity, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* $\chi^2 = 5.699$, $df = 4$, $p < .10$, Cramer's V = .028. Transgender students were more likely than genderqueer students to have appeared before a court. Other gender, cisgender male, and cisgender female students did not differ from one another or from transgender and other gender students in their rates of having appeared before a court. *Been arrested:* $\chi^2 = 5.144$, $df = 4$, $p < .10$, Cramer's V = .026. Students did not differ from one another by gender identity in their rates of having been arrested. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* $\chi^2 = 2.135$, $df = 4$, $p < .10$, Cramer's V = .017. Students did not differ from one another by gender identity in their rates of having served time in a detention facility. *Experienced any of these forms of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system:* $\chi^2 = 15.944$, $df = 4$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .046. Transgender and other gender students reported higher rates of justice system contact than cisgender males and genderqueer students, who were not different from one another. Cisgender females reported higher rates of justice system contact compared to cisgender males, but were not different from transgender, genderqueer, or other gender students.

To test differences in justice involvement due to school among transgender youth, a chi-square test was conducted with the composite measure of experiencing any form of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system was performed with additional transgender categories: $\chi^2 = 17.799$, $df = 6$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .049. Transgender youth were not different from one another in their overall rates of justice system contact.

118   Kosciw, J. G., Greytak. E. A., Palmer, N. A., & Boesen, M. J. (2014). The 2013 National School Climate Survey: *The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

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120   To compare disciplinary experiences by gender conformity, four chi-square tests were conducted among cisgender students. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 22.577$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .064. Gender nonconforming students were more likely to have received detention than gender conforming students. *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 27.830$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$, Cramer's V = .071. Gender nonconforming students were more likely to have been suspended than genderqueer, cisgender male, and cisgender female students. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 3.277$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$, Cramer's V = .024. Cisgender students did not differ from one another by gender expression in their rates of expulsion. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 = 34.236$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .079. Gender nonconforming students reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than gender conforming students.

121   To test differences in dropping out by gender nonconformity, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students did not plan to graduate from high school or were not sure among cisgender LGBQ students: $\chi^2 = 5.445$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$, Cramer's V = .031.

122   To compare justice involvement experiences by gender conformity, four chi-square tests were conducted among cisgender students. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* $\chi^2 = 1.676$, $df = 1$, $p > .10$, Cramer's V = .017. Cisgender students did not differ from one another by gender expression in their rates of having appeared before a court. *Been arrested:* $\chi^2 = .014$, $df = 1$, $p > .10$, Cramer's V = .002. Cisgender students did not differ from one another by gender expression in their rates of having been arrested. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* $\chi^2 = .002$, $df = 1$, $p > .10$, Cramer's V = .001. Cisgender students did not differ from one another by gender expression in their rates of having served time in a detention facility. *Experienced any of these forms of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system:* $\chi^2 = 1.302$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .015. Cisgender students did not differ from one another by gender expression in their rates of overall justice system contact.

123   Irvine, A. (2010). 'We've had three of them': Addressing the invisibility of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and gender nonconforming youths in the juvenile justice system. *Columbia Journal of Gender & Law, 19*, 675–701.

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124   Estrada, R., & Marksamer, J. (2006). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender young people in state custody: Making the child welfare and juvenile justice systems safe for all youth through litigation, advocacy, and education. *Temple Law Review, 79,* 415–438.

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128   To compare disciplinary experiences by housing status, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 13.141$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .042. Homeless students and students who were living with relatives were more likely to have received detention than students who were living at home with their parents. *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 23.717$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .057. Homeless students were more likely to have been suspended than students who were living with relatives and students who were living at home with their parents. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 1.539$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$, Cramer's V = .014. Students did not differ from one another by housing status in their rates of expulsion. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 = 16.151$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .047. Homeless students and students who were living

with relatives reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than students who were living at home with their parents.

129   Based upon the definition of youth homelessness from Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.), students were considered homeless if they were living with friends — accompanied by parent/guardian or not; living in a group home; waiting for transitional placement; or living in any of the following: hotel/motel, streets, couch, car or van, park, campground, or abandoned building

130   To test differences in dropping out by housing status, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students did not plan to graduate from high school: $\chi^2 = 14.136$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .044. Homeless students and students living with relatives were less likely to plan to graduate from high school compared to students who were living at home with their parents.

131   To compare justice involvement due to school discipline by housing status, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 13.141$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .042. Homeless students and students who were living with relatives were more likely to have received detention than students who were living at home with their parents. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* $\chi^2 = 16.102$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .047. Homeless students and students who were living with relatives were more likely to have appeared before a court than students who were living at home with their parents. *Been arrested:* $\chi^2 = 26.634$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .060. Homeless students and students who were living with relatives were more likely to have been arrested than students who were living at home with their parents. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* $\chi^2 = 25.163$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .059. Homeless students were more likely to have served time in a detention facility than students who were living with relatives and students who were living at home with their parents. *Experienced any of these forms of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system:* $\chi^2 = 37.037$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .071. Homeless students and students who were living with relatives reported higher rates of overall justice system contact than students who were living at home with their parents.

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134   Students in the *2013 National School Climate Survey* were asked if they had ever received special accommodations or been in a special class or program for an educational or physical disability at your school. Those who indicated that they had were coded as having a disability.

135   To compare disciplinary experiences by disability status, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Received detention:* $\chi^2 = 41.785$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .077. Students with a disability were more likely to have received detention than students without a disability. *Been suspended from school:* $\chi^2 = 25.008$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .060. Students with a disability were more likely to have been suspended than students without a disability. *Been expelled from school:* $\chi^2 = 6.862$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .031. Students with a disability were more likely to have been expelled than students without a disability. *Experienced any of these forms of school discipline:* $\chi^2 = 40.990$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .077. Students with a disability reported higher rates of school disciplinary action than students without a disability.

136   To test differences in dropping out by disability status, a chi-square test was conducted using a dichotomized variable indicating that students did not plan to graduate from high school: $\chi^2 = 29.056$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .065. Students with a disability were less likely to plan to graduate from high school compared to students without a disability.

137   To compare justice involvement due to school discipline by disability status, four chi-square tests were conducted. *Appeared before a juvenile or criminal court:* $\chi^2 = 27.076$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .062. Students with a disability were more likely to have appeared before a court than students without a disability. *Been arrested:* $\chi^2 = 26.506$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .062. Students with a disability were more likely to have been arrested than students without a disability. *Served time in a juvenile or adult detention facility:* $\chi^2 = 9.186$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$, Cramer's V = .036. Students with a disability were more likely to have served time in a detention facility than students without a disability. *Experienced any of these forms of contact with the juvenile or criminal justice system:* $\chi^2 = 30.753$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .066. Students with a disability reported higher rates of overall contact with the justice system than students without a disability.

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Involved, Invisible, Ignored:

The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K–12 Schools.

A Report from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network

www.glsen.org

In Partnership with COLAGE and the Family Equality Council

Involved, Invisible, Ignored:

The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgender Parents and Their Children
in Our Nation's K–12 Schools

by Joseph G. Kosciw, Ph.D.
   Elizabeth M. Diaz

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The **Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network** is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. Established nationally in 1995, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expresssion.

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PREFACE

On any given day in elementary school classrooms across the country, students are engaged in conversations and activities about their families. Yet not all discussions of family are equally welcome in schools. In 2007, when a nine-year-old girl at Tucker Elementary School in Milton, MA told her fellow third-graders that her mother is a lesbian, she was verbally abused and physically threatened by her classmates. Sadly, this third grader may not be alone in her experiences of a hostile school climate. Current estimates indicate that there are more than 7 million lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) parents with school-age children in the United States, yet little is known about the experiences of this growing number of LGBT-headed families in schools across the country. Incidents like that faced by the Milton third grader indicate that this is an area in urgent need of attention. In order to fill this crucial gap in our knowledge of LGBT issues in schools, GLSEN undertook this study to examine and highlight the school experiences of LGBT-headed families in partnership with COLAGE and the Family Equality Council.

This report, *Involved, Invisible, Ignored*, reveals a complex picture of experiences for both students and parents. The LGBT parents we surveyed are more likely than other parents to be actively engaged in the life of their child's school—more likely to volunteer, to attend parent-teacher conferences or back-to-school nights and to contact the school about their child's academic performance or school experience. Such findings suggest that LGBT parents are, as a group, potential assets for any school community, engaged and concerned
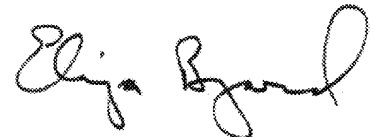
about the quality of their children's education and the school of which they are part. Yet many LGBT parents report feeling neglected, excluded or even mistreated by other members of their school communities, especially other parents. Students with LGBT parents also report school experiences that indicate that action is urgently needed—nearly a fifth of the students in our survey report hearing negative remarks about having LGBT parents from other students, and, even more disturbingly, nearly one-third hear such comments made by school staff.

Results from this study also provide insights into solutions to make schools safer and more welcoming for all members of the school community. Professional development for school staff must include multicultural diversity training, that incorporates accurate information and representations of all family constellations, including LGBT families. Schools must also have comprehensive anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies that protect all students from harassment and include clear and effective systems for reporting and addressing incidents that students experience. Given that the number of supportive faculty and staff available to students has a direct correlation to how safe students feel in schools as well as academic achievement, it is imperative that school staff are trained on effective interventions regarding bullying and harassment. And given that LGBT parents and their children often report that harassment or mistreatment at school comes from the parents of other students, parent-teacher associations must more diligently recognize the diversity of their school communities and ensure that all parents, in addition to students, feel welcome and respected in their school.

LGBT parents must, and often times do, work harder than other parents to ensure safe and effective learning environments for their children. This study reveals that LGBT parents are highly engaged in their children's school experiences, qualities which can be of great benefit to teachers, school administrators and parent-teacher associations in America's schools. When LGBT parents are made to feel invisible in their children's school, schools risk alienating these parents and risk losing the rewards of actively engaged school community members. And when children from LGBT families are subjected to harassment and other mistreatment at school, schools are not providing a safe learning environment and are failing an entire community of students.

Kevin Jennings
Executive Director
GLSEN

Eliza Byard
Deputy Executive Director
GLSEN

Dear Readers,

From classrooms to courthouses to Congress, people who may have no experience with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) families have debated what's best for children with LGBTQ parents in the United States: Will they "turn out" all right? Don't they wish they had "normal" families? Don't the children need a mother and a father? In the face of such constant public debate about us, there has sadly been very little dialogue *with* us about what it's truly like to have one or more LGBTQ parents, much less about the extent to which anti-LGBTQ bias and discrimination in American schools hurt us and our families. Therefore, COLAGE warmly welcomed the opportunity to partner with GLSEN and the Family Equality Council on this landmark research project to document the actual perceptions of middle school and high school students with LGBTQ parents about their school environments.

Involved, Invisible, Ignored provides an unprecedented window into the experiences of COLAGE youth. Students with LGBTQ parents face harassment and bullying each day when they go to school. Although this should never be the case, school staff and administration are often part of the problem.

COLAGE works with thousands of youth like those surveyed for this report. Youth such as Alex, who was left no choice but to transfer to a new middle school in California after facing relentless bullying about his lesbian mothers and gay fathers; and Caroline, a student in Massachusetts who is a leader in her school's Gay Straight Alliance and speaks out about her experience of having LGBT parents in order to create a safer school environment. In all their personal diversity and complexity, these young people are resilient, and have tremendous capacity to heal from such attacks, prevent future harm and be vibrant contributors to their communities. They are also driven by an inspiring vision of strong families, safe schools, and supportive communities. COLAGE is dedicated to bringing their voices and perspectives to bear in every American school.

We hope this report will spark dialogue and lead to more community-based research and action to create safe school environments across the country for all students. We also hope that this report will contribute to greater opportunities for the experiences of youth with LGBTQ parents to be reflected and understood. We encourage you to share these findings with your own community to begin or deepen the conversation.

In solidarity,

Beth Teper
Executive Director
COLAGE

Meredith Fenton
National Program Director
COLAGE

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Dear Readers,

When I began as the executive director of Family Equality Council, I knew we had to get serious about collecting, disseminating, and encouraging more research on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer-parented families. To that end, the Family Equality Council and others convened the *Real Families, Real Facts* academic symposium in May 2006. More than 120 researchers across disciplines shared 25+ years of scientifically valid research available on LGBTQ-parented families. We learned that LGBTQ parents are as capable in raising children as are non-LBGTQ parents, and the children of LGBTQ parents fare just as well as their peers in all key areas of social development.

The research gathered at the symposium has already impacted legal fights around the country. Judges, legislators, and others are swayed by the facts we present. By and large, these decision makers want what's best for each and every child. The better educated they are about our community, the better the decisions they can make.

The study before you takes this research-based approach to the next level by examining the experiences of LGBTQ families in our nation's K through 12 schools.. LGBTQ-parented families go to great lengths to ensure their children's health and safety, especially in schools. Yet too often these families are harassed, discriminated against, and marginalized in their own communities. This pattern of prejudice and exclusion has real consequences for the quality of education *all* children receive.

Involved, Invisible, Ignored speaks directly to the experiences of LGBTQ-parented families in schools, providing a rich resource. I encourage you to share these findings with principals, teachers, PTA leaders, school board members, legislators and more. The knowledge we gain in research is only as helpful as we make it.

I'm proud of the Family Equality Council's involvement in this groundbreaking study and I thank GLSEN and COLAGE for their collaboration in this very important work.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Chrisler
Executive DirectorFamily Equality Council

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

About the Authors

Joseph G. Kosciw, GLSEN's Research Director, has a PhD in psychology from New York University and a BA in psychology and MSEd in counseling from the University of Pennsylvania. He trained as a family therapist and has worked as a school counselor and psychoeducational consultant in elementary and secondary schools. Dr. Kosciw has been conducting community-based research for over 15 years, program evaluations for non-profit social service organizations and for local government, including Gay Men's Health Crisis, Safe Horizons, the New York City Mayor's Office for AIDS Policy Coordination and the New York State Department of Health. He has been involved in GLSEN's research efforts since 1999 and has been with GLSEN full time since November 2004. Dr. Kosciw's doctoral dissertation was on the family processes of LGB-headed families and, in particular, examined how families address and understand family diversity, as well as bias and discrimination.

Elizabeth Diaz, GLSEN's Research Associate, has a BA in Sociology and a BA in Chicano/Latino Studies from the University of Minnesota. In addition to her work with GLSEN, Ms. Diaz is currently completing her Master's thesis, which examines the production of knowledge about Latinos/as in the U.S., for a degree in Sociology from George Washington University. Her other research interests include abstinence-only sexuality education and school climate, and the experiences of LGBTQ youth of color in school. She has been with GLSEN since November 2004.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than a decade, GLSEN has been documenting the problem of anti-LGBT bias in our nation's K–12 schools, particularly the school-related experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students. GLSEN's on-going research about the experiences of LGBT students has proved important in its efforts to make schools safe for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Through its research, GLSEN has been able to identify some of the issues LGBT students face in school—such as hearing derogatory language from other students and faculty, being subjected to harassment and assault because of their sexual orientation or gender expression—as well as important resources for improving school climate—such as supportive faculty, Gay-Straight Alliances and comprehensive safe schools policies.

Students with LGBT parents may also be subjected to and negatively affected by anti-LGBT bias in schools. For some, being open about their family structure may result in bullying, harassment and other negative repercussions. LGBT parents of children in K–12 schools may face difficulties in their school communities related to their own sexual orientation or gender identity, difficulties which non-LBGT parents may not encounter. However, little is known about the school-related experiences of LGBT parents and their children. Although some prior research has examined whether children with same-sex parents are different from other children on school-related outcomes, but there is limited research that explores the family-school relationship, school climate and other school-related experiences for LGBT parents as well as their children. For this reason, GLSEN

worked with two national LGBT family organizations, COLAGE and the Family Equality Council, on this current study. The purpose of this research was to document the school-related experiences of both LGBT parents and students with LGBT parents, including parental decision-making about school enrollment, the family-school relationship, parent-child discussions about school, negative experiences of both parent and child at school, and the presence and potential benefits of LGBT-related supports in school.

The results are intended to inform educators, policymakers and the general public about the school-related experiences of LGBT parents and their children, as part of GLSEN's on-going efforts to ensure that schools are places in which all students are free to learn in a safe environment. Results from this study demonstrate the urgent need for action to create safe and inclusive schools for all students and their families, and provide insight into ways in which this can be accomplished.

METHODS

We obtained national samples of children of LGBT parents currently enrolled in middle school or high school, and of LGBT parents of a child currently enrolled in a K–12 school. Two methods of obtaining participants were implemented: participation of community groups and organizations for LGBT families and Internet surveying. For both methods, data collection was conducted from May to August 2005. Community-based groups and service organizations serving LGBT parents and their children were contacted and paper versions of the surveys were sent to them. Both the parent and student surveys were also made available on the Internet via GLSEN's website. Notices about the on-line survey were posted on LGBT community listservs and electronic bulletin boards, emailed to GLSEN chapters and to national LGBT organizations addressing family issues. A total of 588 surveys from parents with a child in K–12 school were obtained and 154 surveys from students in middle school or high school with an LGBT parent.

KEY FINDINGS

Parental Involvement in School

Results from this study illustrate that LGBT parents are highly involved with their children's education and may be even more likely to be involved than the general population of parents. Compared to a national sample of K–12 parents, LGBT parents were more likely to have volunteered at their child's school (67% vs. 42%) and attended events such as Back-to-School night or parent-teacher conferences (94% vs. 77%). LGBT parents of high school students were more likely than a national sample of parents to be members of the school's parent-teacher organization (41% vs. 26%). In addition,

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LGBT parents reported a higher level of contact with school personnel regarding their child's future education, school program and information about how to assist their child with specific skills and homework. For example, 68% of LGBT parents reported contacting their child's school about his or her school program for that year, compared to 38% of parents nationally.

LGBT parents were often proactive in addressing issues related to their family constellation. Almost half (48%) of parents reported that at the start of the school year they had talked with school personnel about their family. About two-thirds (67%) of parents reported that they had spoken with teachers at their child's school about being an LGBT parent and 45% had such discussions with the principal during the school year. In addition to communication with school personnel, a majority (56%) of LGBT parents reported having discussions with their child about what he or she was learning in school related to LGBT people.

Experiences of Students and Parents in the School Community

Biased Language in School

Hearing biased language at school is an important indicator of the nature and quality of a school's environment for students. Sexist remarks (e.g., hearing someone called a "bitch" in a derogatory way) and homophobic remarks were the most frequent types of biased language that students reported hearing at school. Almost three-quarters (72%) of students reported hearing sexist remarks "often" or "frequently" at school." Three-quarters of students heard the expressions "that's so gay" or "you're so gay" frequently in school, and 65% heard blatantly derogatory homophobic remarks, such as "faggot" or "dyke." A smaller number of students (17%) reported hearing negative remarks specifically about their family and having an LGBT parent.

Unfortunately, intervention by school personnel when biased remarks were made in their presence was not common—only 38% of students said that staff frequently intervened when hearing negative remarks about LGBT parents and less than a third (28%) reported frequent staff intervention with homophobic remarks. Even more disturbing, school staff were identified by some students as being perpetrators of derogatory remarks—49% heard sexist remarks and 39% heard homophobic remarks from teachers or other school staff in their schools.

Student Experiences of Harassment, Assault and Other Mistreatment in School

For many students with LGBT parents, school is not a very safe environment. Half (51%) of all students in our study reported feeling

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unsafe in school because of a personal characteristics, such as their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or race/ethnicity. The most commonly reported reasons for feeling unsafe were because of their family constellation, i.e., having LGBT parents (23%) and because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation (21%).

Although most students in our study did not report being victimized in school, a not insignificant number reported that they had been verbally harassed in school because of their family (40%). In addition to experiencing harassment based on having LGBT parents, some students from LGBT families also experienced difficulties in terms of their peers' assumptions or perceptions about their own sexual orientation, that is they were presumed to be gay or lesbian simply because they had a parent who was LGBT. Although the vast majority of students in the study identified as heterosexual, 38% reported being verbally harassed in school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Mistreatment did not always come from other students but also from adult members of the school community. Nearly a quarter of students had been mistreated by or received negative comments from the parents of other students specifically because they had an LGBT parent (23% for both).

A small percentage of students reported being directly mistreated by or receiving negative comments from a teacher because of their family (11% and 15%, respectively). However, many students with LGBT parents may experience more subtle forms of exclusion from their school. More than a quarter (25%) of students in our study reported feeling that they could not fully participate in school specifically because they had an LGBT parent, and 36% felt that school personnel did not acknowledge that they were from an LGBT family (e.g., not permitting one parent to sign a school form because he or she was not the student's legal parent or guardian). In addition, about a fifth of students reported that they had been discouraged from talking about their parents or family at school by a teacher, principal or other school staff person (22%) and feeling excluded from classroom activities because they had an LGBT parent (20%). For example, some students described incidents in which representations of LGBT families were not included in class activities, such as when constructing a family tree.

Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault

Most students did not tell school authorities when they experienced harassment and assault in school. Less than half (48%) of students who had experienced harassment or assault in school said that they ever reported the incident to a teacher or other school staff. Students were more likely to report incidents to family members—66% of students who experienced school-based victimization told their parent or guardian about the incident, and 43% told another family member. Among LGBT parents, over half (58%) reported that their child had

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ever told them about being harassed in school for any reason, and 28% had been told about harassment that was specific to their family constellation. The majority of parents also reported that they intervened with school personnel after having learned about harassment their child experienced.

Parent Experiences of Harassment, Exclusion and Discrimination

Parents were asked whether they had experienced any mistreatment or heard negative comments from various members of the school community: teachers, principals, other school staff, other parents at school and students at school. Overall, parents in the survey reported a relatively low incidence of negative experiences from school personnel. However, LGBT parents were more likely to report that they had had been mistreated by other parents at school (26%). In addition, a fifth (21%) reported hearing negative comments about being LGBT from other students at their child's school.

As we found with students, LGBT parents had at times experienced more indirect ways of exclusion from their children's schools. Almost a fifth of parents reported that they felt that school personnel failed to acknowledge their type of family (15%) or felt that they could not fully participate in their child's school community because they were an LGBT parent (16%). Parents described events in which they were excluded from the school community, subjected to hostile behaviors from school staff and other parents, having to deal with general discomfort and ignorance, or having their parenting skills called into questions because they were LGBT.

Results from the survey of parents demonstrated how feeling excluded from the school community might have negative implications for the quality of the family-school relationship. Parents who felt that they could not fully participate in their child's school were much less likely than parents who did not feel excluded in this way to have been involved in a parent-teacher organization (44% vs. 63%), to volunteer at school (47% vs. 72%) and to belong to other community groups (e.g., neighborhood associations) with parents from their child's school (25% vs. 40%).

School-Related Resources and Support

Access to Information about LGBT Families and Other LGBT-Related Topics

GLSEN asserts that curricula and other school-based resources that provide positive representations of LGBT people, history and events are important indicators of school climate and positively affect students' experiences at school. Unfortunately, less than a third of both students (27%) and parents (29%) reported that the school curriculum included representations of LGBT people, history or

events in the past school year. When asked specifically about the inclusion of representations of LGBT families in classroom activities, less than a third (31%) of all students said that representations of LGBT families were included when the topic of families came up during class activities.

Supportive Student Clubs

Student clubs that provide support to LGBT students, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), may also be a resource and source of support for youth from LGBT families. However, only about a third (34%) of the students in our study reported that their school had a GSA or other kind of student club that provided support to LGBT students and their allies.

Supportive Members of the School Community

For students, having a supportive adult at school can benefit their academic experience and may be particularly important for those who receive negative reactions from other members of the school community because of their family. For LGBT parents, as with any parent, positive family-school communication is also beneficial for the child's educational attainment. The vast majority (87%) of students reported that they had at least one teacher or other school staff member who was supportive of LGBT issues, such as students with LGBT parents, and more than half (55%) said they had six or more supportive school staff people. The majority of LGBT parents also reported that there were at least a few supportive teachers or school staff at their child's school (67%).

The presence of supportive school staff was, in fact, related to students' academic achievement. For example, students in our survey who could identify many (six or more) supportive staff at their school reported a GPA half a grade higher than students with no supportive school staff (3.4 versus 2.9). A greater number of supportive educators was also related to fewer missed days of school due to safety concerns.

Training for School Personnel

Another consideration for LGBT parents in assessing their child's school climate would be whether school personnel had had any training on LGBT issues. Parents were asked whether such trainings had occurred at their child's school, and few parents (10%) reported being aware that school personnel had any training on LGBT issues. However, LGBT parents who said their child's school had trainings on LGBT-related issues for school personnel were less likely than other parents to report that their child had been bullied or harassed in school, both in general (14% vs. 31%) and specifically related to their family (7% vs. 20%). In addition, parental reports of educator trainings were associated with a more positive response from school personnel when parents addressed their child's harassment. These parents

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were also less likely to report that they themselves had experienced mistreatment in school related to being LGBT.

Safe School Policies

Comprehensive safe schools policies that enumerate categories of protections, such as sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, may provide students with greater protection against bullying and harassment in that they offer explicit protections. Although three-quarters of parents (75%) and students (73%) reported that their school had some type of policy for dealing with incidents of harassment and assault, far fewer reported that the school's policy explicitly mentioned sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression (42% of parents and 35% of students).

Students whose school had a comprehensive safe school policy reported fewer negative experiences in school, particularly with regard to being mistreated by teachers and other students at school because of their family constellation. Parents who reported that their child's school had a comprehensive policy were more likely to report that addressing their child's harassment was an effective intervention (89%), compared to parents who said their child's school had a generic policy (72%) or no policy at all (62%). Parents themselves reported a lower frequency of mistreatment in school when the school had a comprehensive policy, and were less likely to feel unacknowledged as an LGBT family.

State-Level Comprehensive Safe School Legislation

A growing number of states across the country have added explicit protections for LGBT students in their state education anti-discrimination and harassment statutes. As with school-level policies, whereas such laws perhaps have primary importance for protecting students from bullying and harassment, they may also afford protection to the children of LGBT parents with regard to harassment related to their actual or perceived sexual orientation and harassment related to their family constellation. Currently, ten states plus the District of Columbia prohibit discrimination or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation in schools and four of these states also include protections on the basis of gender identity. State-level comprehensive safe school legislation was associated with better school climate for LGBT families. Students in these states were less likely than students in states with generic "anti-bullying" laws or no laws at all to hear certain types of biased language in school, such as homophobic remarks (73% versus 92% and 95%, respectively. Parents from states with comprehensive legislation were least likely to report not feeling acknowledged by the school community as an LGBT family and were most likely to report that the school was inclusive of LGBT families (9% versus 15% and 20%, respectively).

Results from this study provide no evidence that generic "anti-bullying" or safe schools legislation has any benefits over having no

legislation on these indicators of climate. Although there may be many contributing factors that might result in differences across states by type of safe school legislation, these findings nevertheless lend evidence to the claim that comprehensive safe school laws may be more effective than generic laws or no law at all in creating safer schools for LGBT students and families.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Results from this survey highlight the experiences of LGBT parents and their children in K–12 schools, and the need for schools to understand school climate and school safety for both students with LGBT parents and LGBT parents themselves. Educational experts maintain that the family-school relationship is an important factor in academic success for the student. To the extent that certain parents are excluded or not welcome in school activities or are mistreated by school staff and other parents, they may feel that they have less access to school information or educational resources for their children or may not have the same rights to voice problems or concerns than other parents, which in turn, could have negative consequences for student academic performance. It is important for school personnel to understand that harassment of anyone in the school community, whether it be a student or a parent of a student, should not be tolerated. Furthermore, school personnel must consider that their responsibility for maintaining a safe environment for all members of the school community extends beyond students, teachers and staff.

The findings from the survey remind us that school climate is much more than a safety issue; it is also an issue of a student's right to an education. Students in our survey who experienced frequent harassment in school reported skipping classes and missing more days of school than other students. Thus, steps that schools take to improve school climate are also an investment in better educational outcomes. Results from this study also highlight the important role that institutional supports can play in making schools safer for these students, especially supportive faculty, school personnel trainings and comprehensive safe schools policies.

It is clear that there is an urgent need for action to create a safer school climate for all students. There are steps that all concerned stakeholders can take to remedy the situation. Results from this study illustrate the ways in which the presence of effective legislation or policy and in-school resources and supports can have positive effects on school climate, students' sense of safety, and, ultimately, on students' academic achievement and educational aspirations. Furthermore, these results show how such school resources also enhance the family-school relationship, which in turn could further benefit student achievement. Therefore, we recommend educators and education leaders and policymakers:

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- Advocate for comprehensive anti-bullying and anti-discrimination legislation at the state and federal level that specifically enumerate sexual orientation and gender identity/expression as protected categories alongside others such as race, faith and age;

- Adopt and implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies in individual schools and districts, with clear and effective systems for reporting and addressing incidents that students experience;

- Provide training for school staff to improve rates of intervention regarding bullying and harassment and increase the number of supportive faculty and staff available to students;

- Include multicultural diversity training into professional development that includes information about LGBT families;

- Support student clubs, such as GSAs, that address LGBT issues in education; and

- Increase student access to appropriate and accurate information regarding LGBT people, history and events.

Parent-teacher associations must also acknowledge the diversity of their school communities and take steps to ensure that no one experiences mistreatment—students and parents alike. Thus, we advocate that they:

- Endorse policies and practices about appropriate and acceptable conduct for parents at school, and

- Offer educational programs for parents in the school community that include information about LGBT families.

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INTRODUCTION

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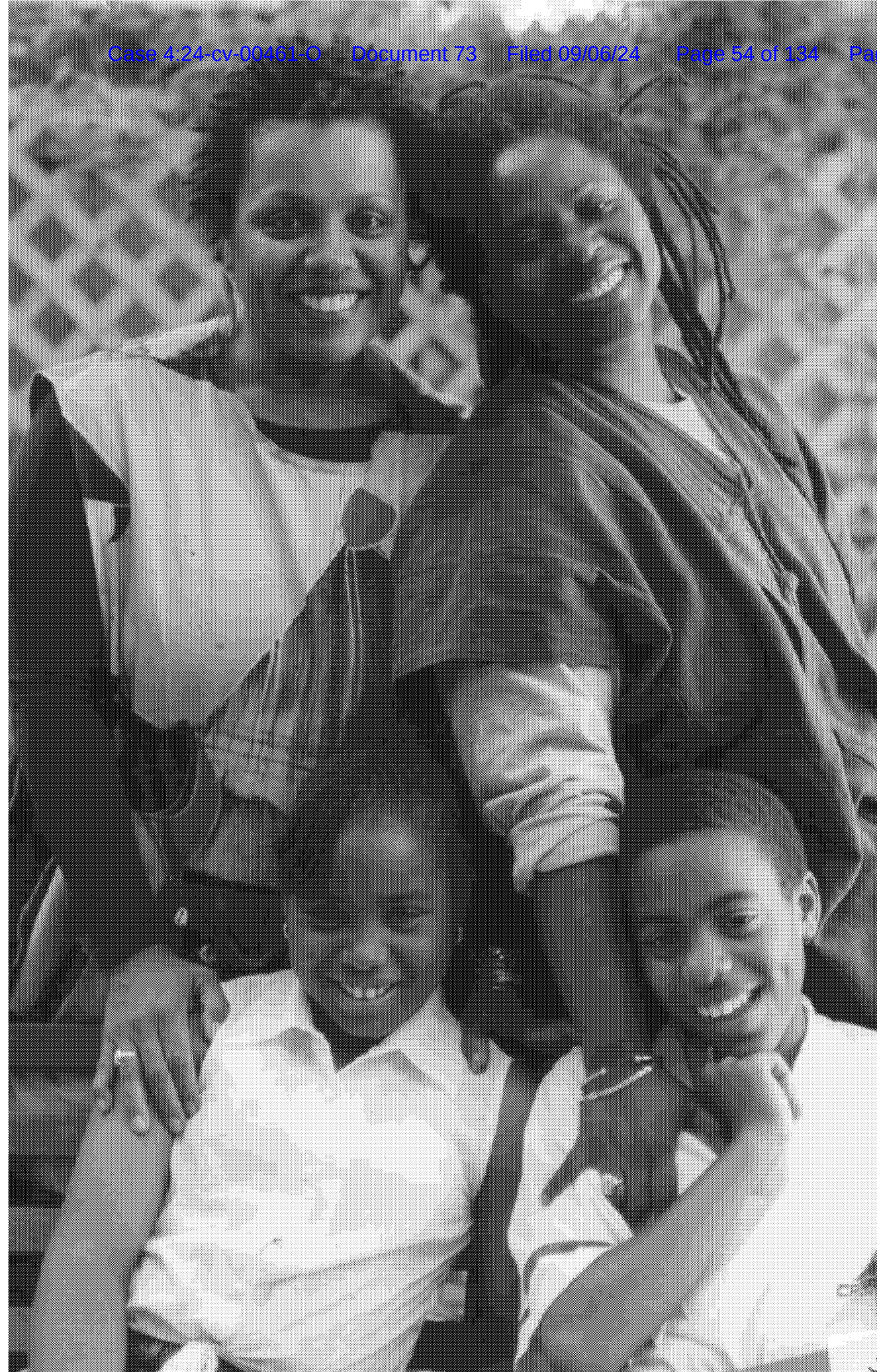
GLSEN strives to make America's schools safe and effective for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. As seen in the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students, harassment and victimization based on sexual orientation or gender identity/expression is common in our schools and the hostile school climate can hinder access to quality education and diminish educational aspirations.[1] For the children of LGBT parents, being open about their family constellation may result in homophobic harassment and victimization from other students regardless of their own sexual orientation. However, little is known about the relationship between family and school for LGBT parents and their children.

Current estimates suggest there are upwards of 7 million lesbian and gay parents with dependent children in the United States, and it is likely that these numbers have been increasing over recent years.[2] Despite these increases, legal and moral controversy over whether or not gay men and lesbians should be permitted to rear children persists. Several states have or are considering laws or regulations that prohibit gay men and lesbians from becoming adoptive or foster parents,[3] and current fervent controversies about same-sex marriage undoubtedly may affect public perceptions of gay and lesbian families. In addition to potential difficulties faced in school by their children, perceptions of a negative social climate by LGBT parents would undoubtedly influence their relationship with their children's schools. These parents may be concerned about disclosing to school personnel that they are LGBT parents and may be unsure how teacher attitudes may affect their child's education or whether their children will experience homophobic teasing or harassment from their peers.

Little is known about the life experiences of this population of families in general and what research that has been done has largely included only gay or lesbian parents and has not been inclusive of parents who identify as bisexual or transgender. Much of this research has focused on comparing children of heterosexual parents regarding general well-being, gender identity and gender role behavior and sexual orientation with little attention to the social context of family life, such as external forces that might account for any differences, or to family processes, such as family communication or family functioning. The research on the parents themselves has largely compared them to heterosexual parents regarding their parenting abilities. In a recent meta-analysis of 21 studies on families with gay and lesbian parents published between 1981 and 1998, the authors, Stacey and Biblarz, found strong empirical support for the claim that there are no differences between children of heterosexual parents and those of gay or lesbian parents in psychological well-being or cognitive functioning.[4] Further, they found across studies that the parenting styles or levels of investment in the children among gay and lesbian parents are the same as or higher than those for heterosexual parents. The authors concluded that in the interest of producing evidence directly relevant to the questions of "harm" often

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proposed by judicial and legislative deliberations over child custody, foster parenting and adoption, prior research has hampered scholarly progress in the field by minimizing or not examining how children of gay or lesbian parents differ from other children in theoretically interesting or meaningful ways.

Several recent studies have examined whether children with same-sex parents are different from other children on school-related outcomes. One recent study, using a nationally representative sample from the United States census, compared the children of lesbian and gay couples to those from other types of family structures and found that children of the same-sex couples were as likely to make normal progress through school as children from other family structures, particularly when family income was taken into acount.[5] Another study of a nationally representative sample of adolescents found that children that same-sex parents were more connected to school than children with oppositve-sex parents.[6]

Although it is useful to demonstrate that children with LGBT parents function in school as well as the children of non-LGBT parents, this research has not explored the school-related experiences of these families, such as the family-school relationship, school climate or the in-school experiences of the students with LGBT parents and only a few empirical studies have begun to examine these issues. Casper, Schultz and Wickens explored the relationship that gay- and lesbian-headed families have with educational institutions.[7] From qualitative interviews with 17 gay and lesbian parents, the authors found that when children of gay or lesbian parents entered school for the first time, they became cognizant of how their family configuration counters the norm and that the children must contend with the fact that their family constellation is either not represented at school or is represented as deviant. Some research has shown that these families have negative encounters with the school. Gartrell, Hamilton, Banks, Mosbacher, Reed, Sparks and Bishop, in their longitudinal study of lesbian-headed families, found that 18% of these mothers reported that their school-age children had had homophobic interactions with peers or teachers.[8] Morris, Balsam and Rothblum found in a large sample of lesbian mothers that 16% of their sample reported that they had experienced harassment, threats, or discrimination at their children's school or by other parents.[9] In previous research on lesbian- and gay-headed families by one of the authors of this current study, 16% of the parents reported having been mistreated or received negative reactions by their child's teacher or daycare provider.[10]

The above studies are consistent in reporting that a sizeable percentage of lesbian and gay parents report that they themselves or their children have had difficulties in school because of their family constellation. Only one study has documented reports from the children's perspective about their school experiences. Tasker and Golombok interviewed young adults with lesbian mothers and found

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that 36% of the participants reported that they had been teased by peers sometime during their school years because of their mother's sexual orientation and 44% reported that they had been teased during their school years about their own sexual orientation or "inappropriate" gender-role behavior.[11]

One recent study has examined the ways in which LGBT parents may try to prevent school-related problems. Mercier and Harold, in a recent qualitative study, found that in order to minimize any potential for problems, the parents often selected their child's school because it was known for openness and multiculturalism, had direct communication with teachers and administrators about their type of family constellaiton and were frequently involved in school activities.[12]

Given that little prior research has examined family-school relationships among this population of families and even less research has explored the perspective of the children of LGBT parents, the purpose of this study was to explore the school-related experiences of families with lesbian and gay parents. In particular, we explore parental decision-making about school enrollment, the family-school relationship, parent-child discussions about school, negative experiences of both parent and child at school and the presence and potential benefits of LGBT-related supports in school.

Notes

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5   Rosenfeld, M. J. (2007). Nontraditional families and childhood progress through school. Paper presentation for the 2007 American Sociological Association Meetings.

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12   Mercier, L. M. & Harold, R. D. (2003) At the interface: Lesbian-parent families and their children's schools. *Children & Schools*, 25, 35–47.

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METHODS

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Instrument Development

Given the paucity of prior research on the educational experiences of LGBT families, we collaborated with two national organizations that work specifically with LGBT families in developing the parent and student survey instruments: 1) COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), an organization for children of LGBT parents, and 2) Family Equality Council, an organization for LGBT families. GLSEN researchers met with representatives from both organizations, including LGBT parents and adult children of LGBT parents, on several occasions to determine what were the most salient educational issues that needed to be explored with LGBT families and, in some instances, to craft the actual language to be used for certain survey items. We believe that the expertise of GLSEN's Research Department in examining LGBT issues in education along with the knowledge from COLAGE and Family Equality Council of the issues facing LGBT families when interacting with schools resulted in comprehensive and accurate measures.

For the child survey, we used a modified version of GLSEN's National School Climate Survey (NSCS). The NSCS assesses two dimensions of school climate: indicators of a hostile climate and indicators of support for LGBT issues.[13] Indicators of a hostile climate include the frequency of hearing biased language in school (i.e., homophobic, racist and sexist remarks), and experiences of verbal and physical harassment and physical assault based on sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, race/ethnicity, disability and religion. To this dimension, we added specific questions about negative remarks and harassment students may have encountered because of their parents' sexual orientation. Indicators of support for LGBT issues included the presence of student clubs that address LGBT issues (e.g., a Gay-Straight Alliances or diversity clubs), curricula that are inclusive of the lives of LGBT persons, the presence of supportive teachers or school personnel and the presence of a safe school policy that includes explicit protection based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The parent survey contained measures assessing: basic demographic information, reports of their interactions with school personnel, reports of any negative school experiences reported by their children, concerns about their children's safety in school, community involvement, parenting activities as well as their perceptions of indicators of support for LGBT issues in their child's school. On certain sections of the survey, such as questions about their child's school and specific parent-child activities, parents with more than one school-age child were asked to answer these sections about only one child and were asked to choose the oldest of their school-age children.

Data Collection

This report reflects survey responses from national samples of LGBT parents of children enrolled in K–12 schools as well as a separate sample of secondary school students with LGBT parents. In order to create a more representative sample of parents and students, we implemented two methods of obtaining participants: participation of community groups for LGBT families and Internet surveying. For both methods, data collection was conducted from May to August 2005.

Community Organizations

Participants were obtained through community-based groups or service organizations serving LGBT parents and their children. Our original intent was to randomly sample seventy-five of such groups or organizations from a master list of 137 groups. However, as we began contacting these organizations we learned that many of the groups were not currently active. Further, many of the organizations did not hold regular in-person meetings or activities and were primarily in contact with their members through e-mail listservs or newsletters. Of the original list, 91 groups appeared to be currently active.[14] We were successful in making contact with 35 of the 91 groups. All of the groups agreed to notify their constituents about the study. Most (23 of the 35 groups) agreed to have their members complete paper surveys. Three of these groups had their members complete the survey at a group event and sent the completed surveys to GLSEN's Research Department. Several other groups simply instructed their members to complete the survey and mail it directly to GLSEN. Almost all of the contact persons for these groups reported that many of their constituents were not in the appropriate age range for our study: many of the parents had children who were not yet school-age and most of the children were not 13 years of older and would not eligible to take the student survey.

In addition to contacting community groups, we recruited participants at several summer events for LGBT families, including Family Week in Saugatuck, MI and Family Week in Provincetown, MA. Further, we contacted summer camp programs specifically for children of LGBT families. Of the 11 camps, 6 agreed to have their campers complete the student survey and 2 allowed GLSEN Research staff to visit the camp to collect the data.

Internet Survey

Obtaining LGBT families solely from community-based groups or service organizations could potentially lead to a biased sample— parents involved in these groups or organizations may be more "out" or more comfortable with their sexual orientation or parental status in the LGBT community, and the children in these groups may be more comfortable talking about LGBT family issues. In addition, these groups or organizations may be more likely to attract families who are

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in close geographic vicinity, and therefore families who live in areas without such supports would not be represented. For these reasons, we implemented this second method of obtaining participants: both the parent and child surveys were made available on the Internet via GLSEN's website. Notices about our on-line survey were posted on LGBT community listservs and electronic bulletin boards. Notices were also emailed to GLSEN chapters and to national LGBT organizations addressing family issues, such as Family Equality Council, COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and HRC (Human Rights Campaign) FamilyNet. A total of 588 surveys from parents with a child in K–12 school were obtained (508 Internet, 80 paper surveys) and 154 surveys from students in middle school or high school with an LGBT parent (58 Internet, 96 paper).

Respondent Demographics

Parents of K–12 Students. A total of 588 LGBT parents with children in K–12 schools participated in the study. The majority of the parents were women, less than one-fifth were men (17%) and only 2% of the sample identified as transgender. The vast majority identified as lesbian or gay, however 5% identified as bisexual and 2% as other orientations. The average age of these parents was 43 years. Most parents had one or two children (41% and 45%, respectively); fewer than 10% reported having three or more children living at home. Over half the sample reported that only one child was currently attending a K–12 school (58%) and a third reported they had two children in school (33%). Most of the parents reported that their children were in elementary school grades and less than a quarter reported that their children were in middle school (22%) or in high school (20%).

Table 1 shows the racial/ethnic composition of both samples, as well as information about the family racial/ethnic make-up from the parents' survey. Although the vast majority of parents were white or European American, about 40% of the reported family racial compositions were multiracial—about 16% of the families represented had white parent(s) and a child of color, and about 14% of the families represented had two parents, one of whom was white and one of whom was a person of color.

Secondary School Students. A total of 154 youth participated in this study and were between the ages of 13 and 20, with the average age of respondents being 15 years. Most respondents were female, less than a third (30%) were male and 2% were transgender. As also shown in Table 1, almost two-thirds were white and about a tenth were African American or Black (11%) or Hispanic or Latino (7%). The majority of respondents were in high school (58%), nearly three-quarters of which were located in a large city or a suburb of a large city (see Table 2). The students most commonly attended schools in the northeastern and the western regions of the country (40% and 32%, respectively).

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Table 1. Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of Survey Participants

Race/Ethnicity of Participants	Students	Parents
White	64%	88%
African American or Black	11%	1%
Hispanic or Latino	7%	4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	2%	1%
Native American	5%	1%
Multiracial	9%	1%
Other race/ethnicity	2%	1%

Family Racial Composition (Parent Sample Only)

White Couple, White Children	53%
White Couple, Children of Color	16%
Mixed Race Couple, White Children	5%
Mixed Race Couple, Children of Color	9%
Couples of Color, Children of Color	3%
Single White Parent, White Children	8%
Single White Parent, Children of Color	3%
Single Parent of Color, Children of Color	3%

The majority of students in the survey identified as heterosexual or straight, while 10% identified as lesbian or gay and 9% as bisexual. Given that a large portion of the survey respondents learned about the survey via GLSEN's website and that GLSEN provides information and resources for LGBT-identified students, it is likely that the percentages of students in this study who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual is greater than would be expected in the general population of adolescents with LGBT parents. In fact, this hypothesis is borne out by the differences between the sample of students who completed paper surveys and those who responded online—only 5% of the students who completed paper versions of the survey at summer camps, COLAGE events or LGBT family events identified as lesbian or gay compared to 18% of the students who learned of the survey via the GLSEN website. Thus, this demographic information on sexual orientation from the survey is not necessarily an accurate reflection of the population of adolescents with LGBT parents as a whole.

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Table 2. School Characteristics

Grade Levels	Students	Parents
K through 12 school	5%	9%
Elementary school	1%	43%
Lower school (elementary and middle school grades)	7%	15%
Middle school	18%	15%
Upper school (middle and high school grades)	11%	2%
High school	58%	16%
Community Type	**Students**	**Parents**
Urban	45%	30%
Suburban	26%	19%
Rural/Small Town	29%	15%
School Type	**Students**	**Parents**
Public school	81%	78%
Charter school	19%	4%
Magnet school	22%	11%
Religious-affiliated school	8%	7%
Other private or independent school	11%	16%
Region	**Students**	**Parents**
Northeast	40%	35%
South	10%	17%
Midwest	18%	20%
West	32%	28%

Notes

13 Kosciw & Diaz 2006.

14 It was not always possible to be certain that the local group was, in fact, truly active. In most cases, the contact information was only an email address or a phone number with an outgoing voicemail that did not mention the name of the group. Thus, if an email address was not returned as invalid or the phone number was not disconnected or was not a wrong listing, we considered the group to be active.

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RESULTS

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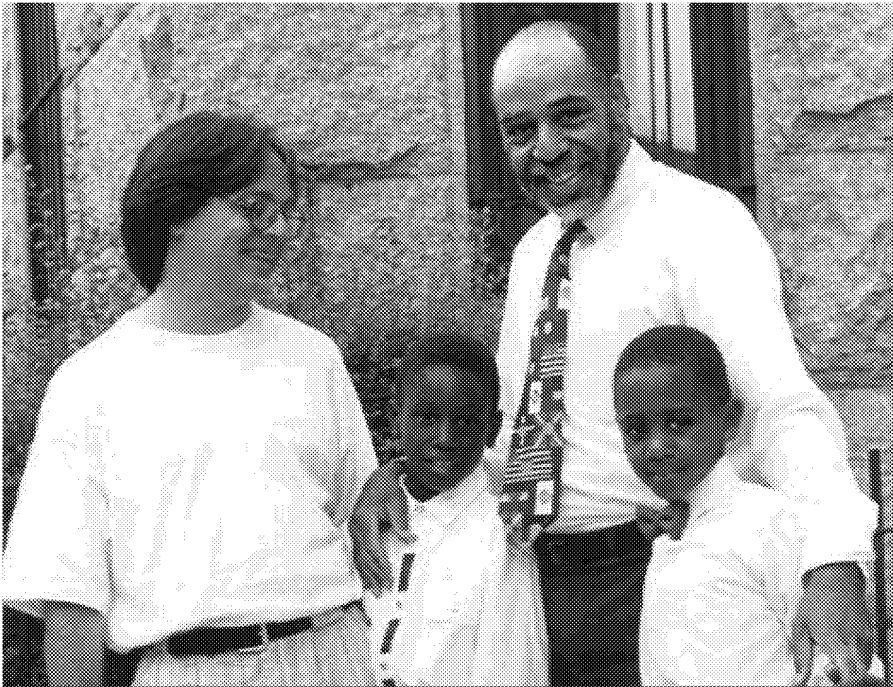
Parental Decision-Making About School Selection

Although the majority of parents reported that their children attended public schools, the percentage was significantly lower than the national percentage (78% vs. 89%).[15] Furthermore, of those parents who sent their children to non-public school, they were less likely to be religious-affiliated schools (7%) and more likely to be independent schools (16%), which again is different from national percentages.[16]

In order to understand parents' decision-making about the schools they select (if they select them) for their children, parents were asked about their reasons for selecting their child's school. Table 3 shows the overall percentages of parents who identified each reason for school selection and the percentages. Overall, parents most commonly reported that they chose the local or neighborhood school (59%) and that they chose the school based on its academic reputation (54%). Over a quarter of parents also reported that they considered the diversity of the school population (31%), that they knew other families at the school (29%), as well as a non-academic reputation of the school, such as arts or music (29%).

Parents were also able to indicate other reasons why they selected their child's school. Of the 138 parents who provided another reason, the largest percentage (16%) was related to the academic approach of the school (e.g., using Montessori method, "a progressive approach," an "alternative learning model" and "an emphasis on global studies"). Another 12% of these parents reported that their school selection was related to special education services provided (e.g., school for the blind, a program for children with Asperger's syndrome, a program for children with "learning differences"). Ten percent of parents said that

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they selected the school based on language programs, such as a Spanish or Chinese immersion program or a bilingual school. An additional 10% selected the school because of a previous history with the school (e.g., the parent is an alumnus/alumna, an older sibling of the child attended the same school).

Table 3 also shows reasons for school selection by type of school (public, private-religious, private-other). It is not surprising that there were differences across the types of school. For public school parents, the overwhelming majority reported having chosen the local school whereas the majority of private school parents reported having chose the school based on its academic reputation.

Parents were specifically asked whether their school selection was related to knowing other LGBT families in the school or the school having a reputation for being welcoming of LGBT families. As also shown in Table 3, these reasons were more common for parents of children attending non-religious private schools. Nearly half of these private school parents (46%) reported that the school's reputation for being welcoming of LGBT families was a consideration compared to less than a quarter of parents of children in religious schools and in public schools (15% and 11%, respectively).[17]

Table 3. Reasons for School Selection by School Type

	Total	Public	Private– Religious	Private Other
It's our neighborhood school. [a,b]	59%	72%	23%	9%
I know there are other students with LGBT parents there. [b]	17%	14%	18%	32%
I know that the school has a diverse population of students and families. [b,c]	31%	29%	23%	45%
It had a reputation for valuing and working on diversity. [b,c]	22%	16%	23%	53%
It had a good reputation for academics [a,b]	54%	49%	67%	73%
It had a good reputation for other programs, such as art, music or athletics. [b,c]	29%	24%	21%	53%
It had a reputation for being welcoming of LGBT families. [b,c]	17%	11%	15%	46%
I know other families with children there. [b]	29%	27%	36%	40%
I know some of the teachers there.	14%	14%	23%	10%
Other Reasons	24%	19%	31%	44%

[a] Public v. Religious; [b] Public v. Private; [c] Religious v. Private

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LGBT parents may choose schools that are more tolerant of diverse family forms. Aside from inclusion of LGBT parents, a sizeable percentage of all parents reported that the school having a diverse population of students and families was a consideration in selection—about a quarter of public school parents and private religious school parents (29% and 23%, respectively) and nearly half of private school parents (45%). Even among parents whose child attended their local public school, about a quarter reported that they chose their school, in part, because of reasons related to diversity. This finding suggests that LGBT parents may not only seek out what schools would be most accepting, but they may seek to live in communities that would be more tolerant of families like their own.

Results from the survey further indicate that familiarity with the school and the inclusivity and diversity of the school may be greater concerns for parents of elementary school students. As shown in Table 4, the percentage of elementary school parents who based their school selection on knowing that the school included other LGBT families, that it had a reputation for a diverse population and had a reputation for welcoming LGBT families was significantly higher than parents of children in middle or high school.[18]

Parents were also asked whether they had specifically sought out information from the schools pertaining to how they would be with

Table 4. Reasons for School Selection by School Level

	Total	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
It's our neighborhood school.	59%	56%	60%	66%
I know there are other students with LGBT parents there. [a]	17%	22%	8%	8%
I know that the school has a diverse population of students and families. [a]	31%	38%	23%	17%
It had a reputation for valuing and working on diversity.a	22%	29%	13%	13%
It had a good reputation for academics. [a]	54%	61%	46%	41%
It had a good reputation for other programs, such as art, music or athletics.	28%	30%	25%	28%
It had a reputation for being welcoming of LGBT families. [a]	17%	22%	8%	8%
I know other families with children there. [a]	29%	36%	24%	16%
I know some of the teachers there.	14%	14%	13%	13%
Other Reasons	24%	23%	28%	22%

[a] Elementary v. Middle & High Schools

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Table 5. Parental Seeking of Information About LGBT Issues by School Type

Did you seek out information about the school your child attends pertaining to how they would be with LGBT issues before enrolling your child? [a]

	Total	Public	Private-Religious	Private Other
Yes	45%	39%	44%	78%
No	55%	61%	56%	22%

How important was this information in making your decision to enroll your child at that school?

	Total	Public	Private-Religious	Private Other
Very Important	78%	61%	71%	79%
Somewhat Important	33%	27%	29%	21%
Not at all Important	<1%	<1%	0%	0%

[a] Private-Other significantly higher than other two groups.

Table 6. Parental Seeking of Information About LGBT Issues by School Level

Did you seek out information about the school your child attends pertaining to how they would be with LGBT issues before enrolling your child? [a]

	Total	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Yes	45%	54%	37%	27%
No	55%	46%	63%	73%

How important was this information in making your decision to enroll your child at that school? [a]

	Total	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Very Important	66%	73%	45%	53%
Somewhat Important	34%	27%	55%	47%
Not at all Important	<1%	<1%	0%	0%

[a] Elementary group significantly higher than other two groups.

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LGBT issues before enrolling their child and, if so, how important this information was in their decision to enroll the child. As shown in Table 5, about half (45%) of parents overall reported that they had sought out this information. Of these parents, over three-quarters (78%) reported that the information gained was very important in making a decision to enroll their child. With regard to difference by type of school, private school parents were much more likely to have sought out information about LGBT issues from the school compared to other parents (see also Table 5).[19] The information learned about the school and LGBT issues was somewhat less important in decision-making for public school parents than non-religious private school parents.[20] Elementary school parents were also much more likely to seek out information from the school about LGBT issues (see Table 6). Also, the average rating on the importance of this information for school enrollment decision-making was marginally higher for elementary school parents than for middle and high school parents.[21]

It is important to note that parents who enroll their children in public school may be less able to make their school selection based on issues of tolerance related to LGBT families or the diversity of the school. Depending on the school district, some parents may actually have no choice as to which public school their child attends. Thus, it is important that one not interpret these results related to decision-making about school selection as an indication of interest or concern in the child's education. Although the difference between public school and non-religious private school parents in seeking information was quite large (39% vs. 78%), the difference in the level of importance that this information had, although statistically significant, was not nearly as vast (61% vs. 79%). Similarly, parents who base their school selection on the family's religion or who wish their child to receive religious instruction in school may also have fewer options available to them.

Family Composition and School Selection

Although many LGBT parents consider issues of school diversity when making a school selection, this may be even more true for LGBT multiracial families and families of color. As shown in Table 7, families with a student of color were more likely to choose a school based on its diverse population than families with a white student regardless of the race/ethnicity of the parent or parents (43% v. 25%).[22]

Single-parent and two-parent families did not differ on their reasons for school selection except for choosing the local school. Single parents were less likely to report that they chose their local school compared to partnered parents—44% vs. 61%.[23]

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School Selection by Locality and Region

We also were interested in whether parents' decision-making about school selection varied by their locale (urban, suburban, small town/rural) or the region of the country in which they live (Northeast, South, Midwest, West). Figure 1 shows that parents from urban areas were less likely to have chosen their local neighborhood school and further illustrates those reasons for school selection that were different across locales.[24] With the exception of choosing a school because of knowing one or more of the teachers, parents from urban areas were more likely to have considered all the reasons for selecting their child's school. One of the strongest differences between urban parents and others was selecting the school because it had a diverse school population: 42% of urban parents compared to 25% of suburban parents and 15% of small town/rural parents. It may be that parents in urban areas have a greater variety of schools to consider when enrolling their children. It may also be that in some urban school districts, schools vary widely with regard to school climate, safety and academic reputation and parents in such districts may consider more factors when selecting their child's school.

Figure 2 illustrates differences across regions with regard to reasons for school selection. Parents in the West were least likely and parents in the South most likely to have chosen their neighborhood schools. Parents in the Northeast and West were more likely to have considered most of the reasons for school selection than parents in the South and Midwest.[25] As shown in Figure 2, parents in the Northeast and West were more likely to have reported selecting the school because they knew other families there, because of the school reputation for diversity and for accepting LGBT families as well as because of its diverse school population. With regard to selecting a school because of its non-academic reputation, parents from the West were higher than parents from all other regions.

Table 7. Parents Choosing Schools with Diverse School Population: Comparison by Family Race/Ethnicity [a]

	White Student	Student of Color	Total
White Parent(s)	25%	43%	29%
Multiracial Couple	32%	—	32%
Parent(s) of Color	—	40%	40%
Total	25%	42%	30% [b]

[a] The differences between families with a student of color and families with a white student were significantly different, $p<.01$, regardless of the race/ethnicity of the parent(s).
[b] Note: This percentage is different than the 31% shown in Tables 4 and 5 because the responses of parents who did not identify the race/ethnicity of themselves or their child were excluded.

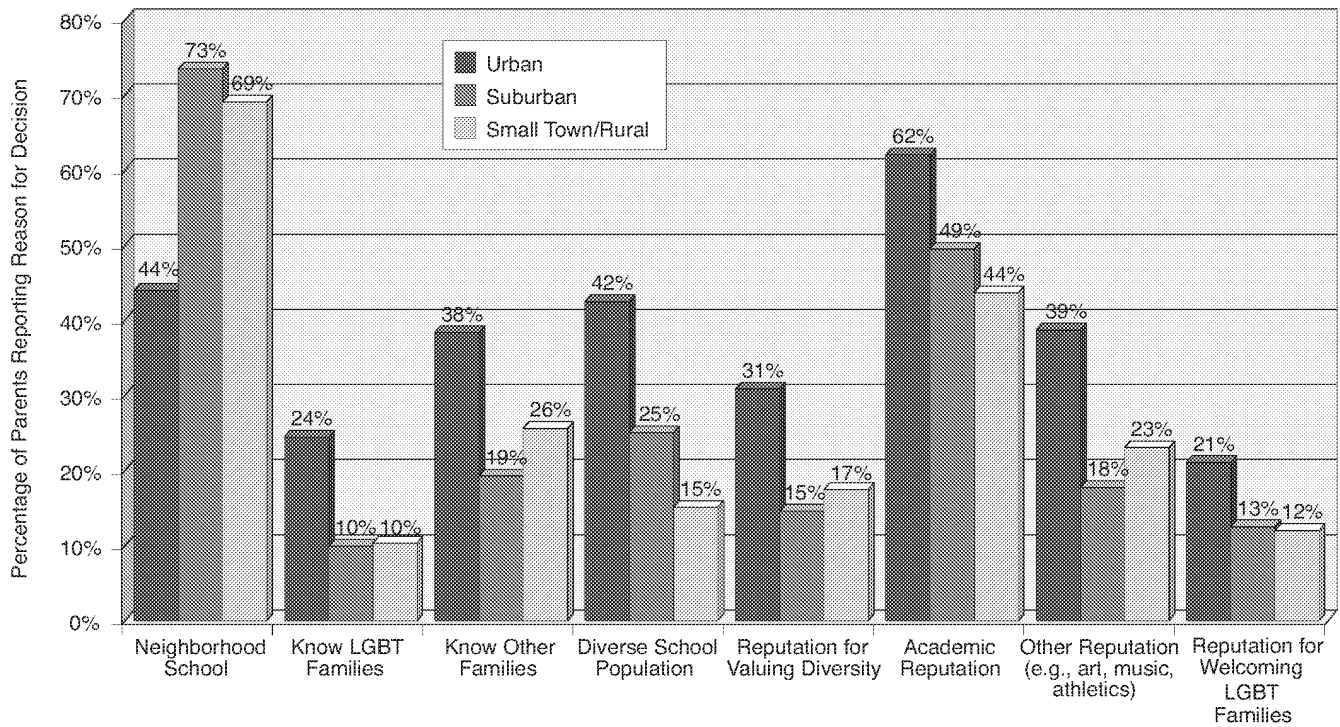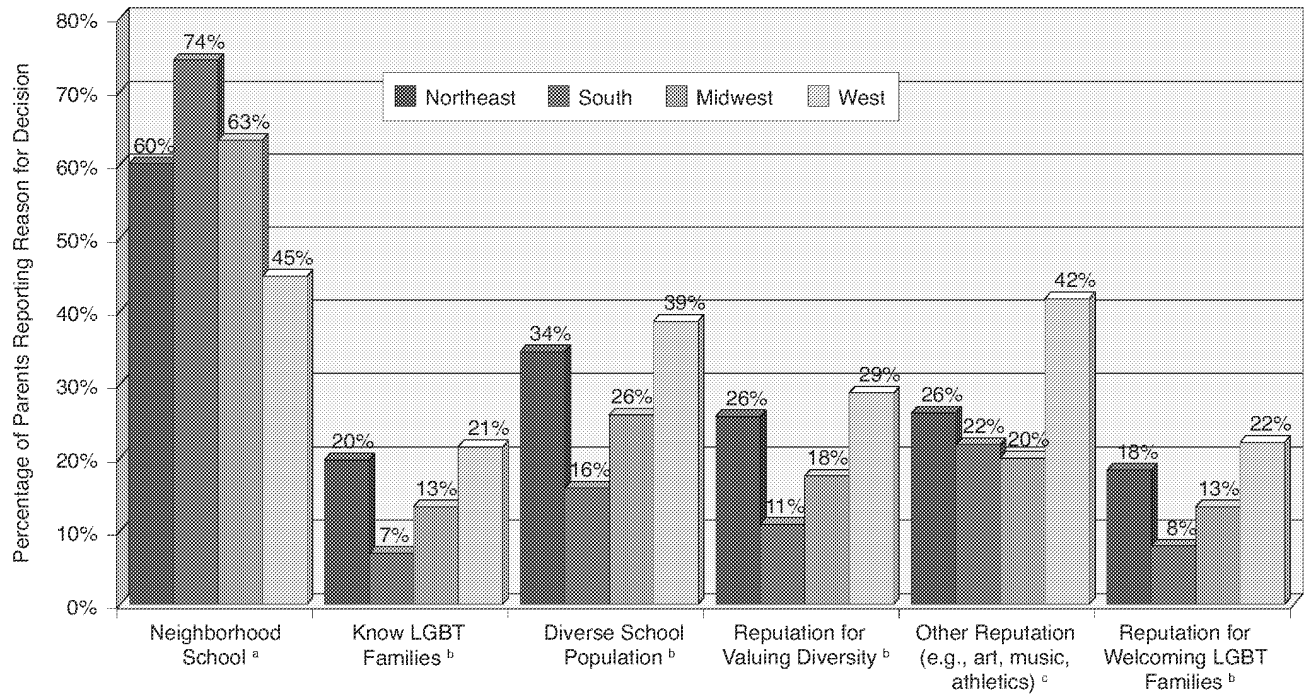**Figure 1. Parents' Reasons for Choosing School: Comparison by Locality**

Figure 2. Parents' Reasons for Choosing School: Comparison by Region

[a] South > all, West < all; [b] Northeast and West > South; [c] West > all. Differences significant at $p<.01$.

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Notes

15 Wirt, J., Choy, S., Rooney, P., Provasnik, S., Sen, A., and Tobin, R. (2004). *The Condition of Education 2004* (NCES 2004-077). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

16 Ibid.

17 χ^2=64.87, ϕ=.33, p<.01, df=2.

18 Other LGBT Families at School: χ^2=21.29, ϕ=.19; Reputation for Diverse School: χ^2=23.51, ϕ=.20; Reputation for Welcoming LGBT Families: χ^2=18.71, ϕ=.18. All significant, p<.01, df=2.

19 χ^2=47.20, Cramer's V=.28

20 F(2,564)=10.41, p<.001. Univariate effects were considered at p<.01.

21 School level differences in information seeking were examined using Chi-square analysis: χ^2=30.47, Cramer's V=.23. Differences in the level of importance of the information was examined using a one-way analysis of variance: F(2,563)=4.33, p<.05; post-hoc analyses were considered at p<.05.

22 Differences across the family racial composition groups were tested with a series of Chi-square analyses. Results for the overall comparison was significant: χ^2=17.31, Cramer's V=.17, p<.01, df=3.

23 To compare differences between these types of family constellations, a series of Chi-square tests were performed. Given the large number of variables, a more restrictive p-value was employed, p<.01. The variable "Chose neighborhood school" was significant, χ^2=8.20, ϕ=.12, p<.01, df=2.

24 To compare differences across localities, a series of Chi-square tests were performed. Given the large number of variables, a more restrictive p-value was employed, p<.01. Chose local school: χ^2=24.36, Cramer's V=.20; Know LGBT Families: χ^2=11.90, Cramer's V=.18; Diverse Population: χ^2=18.04, Cramer's V=.18; Commitment to Diversity: χ^2=14.48, Cramer's V=.16; Other Reputation: χ^2=21.06, Cramer's V=.19; Accepting of LGBT Families: χ^2=10.42, Cramer's V=.13. All significant, p<.01, df=3. Post-hoc differences across localities were tested with subsequent chi-square tests between pairs of localities.

25 To compare differences across regions, a series of Chi-square tests were performed. Given the large number of variables, a more restrictive p-value was employed, p<.01. Chose local school: χ^2=46.6, df=2, ϕ=.28; Know LGBT Families: χ^2=21.6, ϕ=.19; Diverse Population: χ^2=34.7, ϕ=.24; Commitment to Diversity: χ^2=19.25, ϕ=.18; Academics: χ^2=13.9, ϕ=.15; Other Reputation: χ^2=26.5, ϕ=.21; Accepting of LGBT Families: χ^2=8.13, ϕ=.12; Know Other Families: χ^2=20.6, ϕ=.19. All significant, p<.01, df=3. Post-hoc differences across regions were tested with subsequent chi-square tests between pairs of regions.

24

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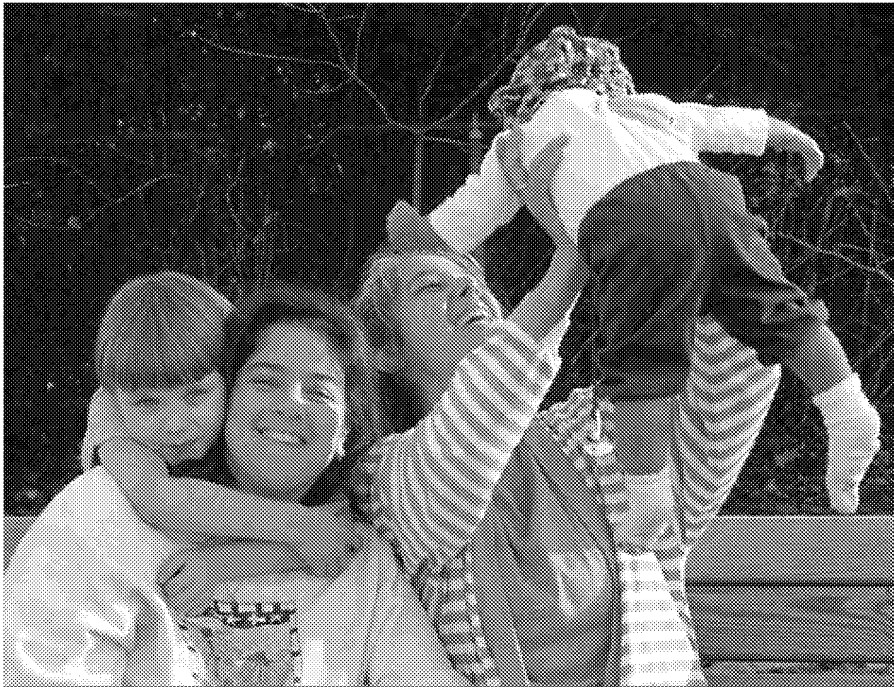
Parental Involvement in School

Research has shown that positive relationships between the family and the school result in better academic achievement for children.[26] For this reason, we examined the level of parental involvement in school activities among LGBT parents and the frequency of parent-school communication about the child's experiences in school.

Parental Activity in School

As shown in Table 8, the majority of parents in the study had been involved in their child's school in the past year. Nearly all parents (94%) reported that they had attended a parent-teacher conference or Back-to-School night and two-thirds (67%) had volunteered at the school. About half (51%) of the parents reported that they belonged to the school's parent-teacher organization (e.g., PTA or PTO) and an even higher percentage reported that they had taken part in activities of this organization in the past year (regardless of belonging to the organization). LGBT parents may also be proactive in addressing issues related to their particular family constellation. About half of the parents (48%) reported that they had gone to the school at the start of the school year to talk to them about their family.

The level of parent-school interaction may vary with the age of the student. In addition to overall percentages, Table 8 shows percentages of parent-school involvement by school level. With the exception of attending parent-teacher conferences, parents of elementary school students were more likely to report involvement in all school activities.[27] For example, whereas 58% of elementary school parents reported having attending meetings of the parent-teacher

Table 8. Parental Involvement in School by School Level

	Total	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Belong to the school's parent-teacher org. [a]	51%	57%	46%	41%
Attend meetings of the parent-teacher org. [a]	49%	58%	41%	33%
Take part in the activities of the parent-teacher organization. [a]	60%	71%	51%	34%
Act as a volunteer at the school. [a]	67%	80%	52%	46%
Belong to any other organization with several parents from your child's school (e.g., neighborhood or religious organizations). [a]	37%	41%	39%	24%
Attend parent-teacher conference or Back-to-School night.	94%	96%	93%	89%
Make a special trip to school at the start of the school year to talk to school personnel about your family. [a]	48%	58%	41%	27%

[a] Elementary School Group higher than other two groups.

Table 9. Parental Involvement in School by School Type

	Total	Public	Private– Religious	Private Other
Belong to the school's parent-teacher org.	51%	50%	39%	63%
Attend meetings of the parent-teacher org. [b]	49%	46%	54%	68%
Take part in the activities of the parent-teacher organization. [a]	60%	56%	56%	79%
Act as a volunteer at the school. [a]	67%	64%	64%	84%
Belong to any other organization with several parents from your child's school (e.g., neighborhood or religious organizations).	37%	36%	44%	43%
Attend parent-teacher conference or Back-to-School night.	94%	94%	95%	92%
Make a special trip to school at the start of the school year to talk to school personnel about your family.	48%	49%	41%	49%

[a] Private School group higher than other two groups.
[b] Private School group higher than Public School group.

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organization, 41% of middle school parents and 33% of high school parents reported this type of involvement.

There were also a few differences in parent-school involvement across the types of schools the children attended.[28] Although parents from private schools (non-religious) were no more likely to be a member of the parent-teacher organization, they were more likely to attend meetings and take part in the activities of the organization compared to other parents (see Table 9). These parents were also more likely to act as a volunteer in the school.

In order to examine whether the involvement of LGBT parents in their children's schools was similar to the involvement of parents generally, we compared results from this sample of LGBT parents to available national statistics on parental involvement in school. Figure 3a compares the percentages of LGBT parents and a national sample of K–12 parents available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on two indicators of parental involvement: attending parent-teacher conferences and acting as a volunteer in school. On both indicators, LGBT parents were more likely to be involved in their children's school than parents in the national sample.[29] With regard to parent-teacher conferences, nearly all of the LGBT parents (94%) reported having participated in the past year compared to 77% of the national sample of parents.[30] When considering the school level, the two samples are not different at the elementary school level but the gap between LGBT parents and the national sample of parents widens at middle school and further at high

Figure 3a. Comparisons of Parental Involvement in School Activities: LGBT Parents versus National Sample of Parents
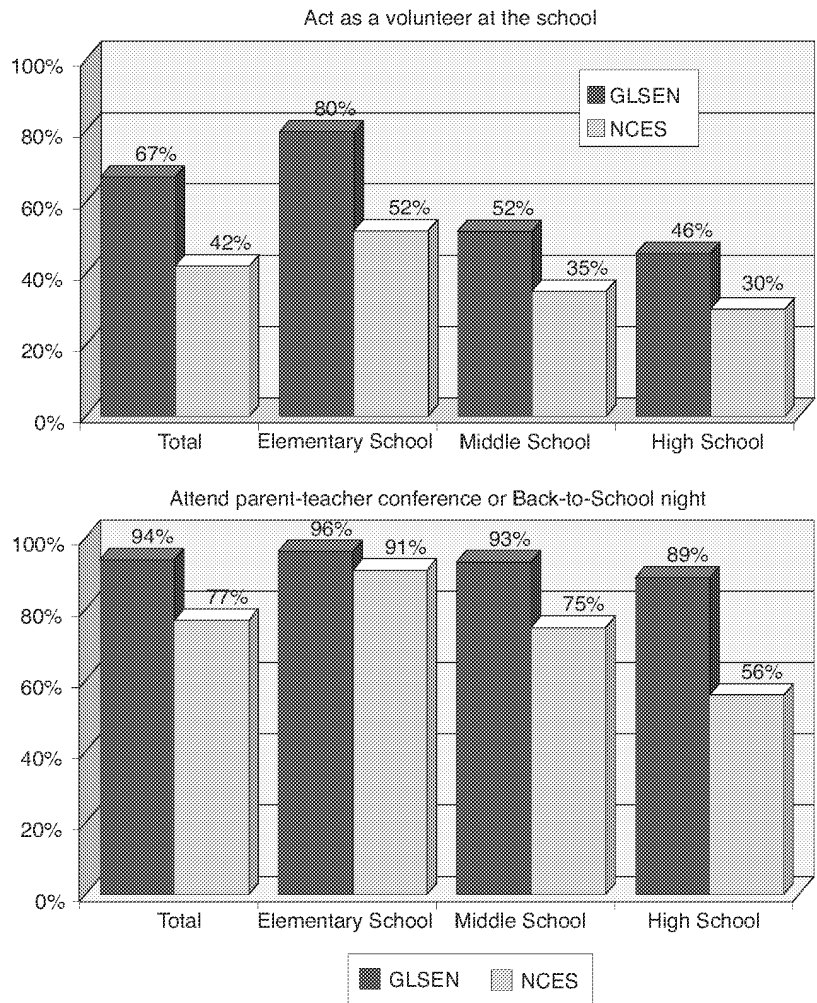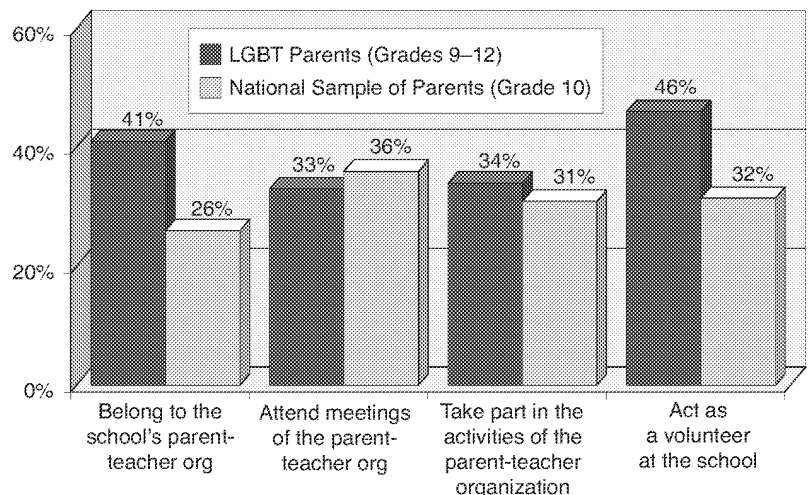
Act as a volunteer at the school

Attend parent-teacher conference or Back-to-School night

Figure 3b. Comparisons of Parental Involvement in School Activities: LGBT Parents versus National Sample of Parents

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school. As also shown in Figure 3a, LGBT parents were more likely to volunteer in their child's school than parents nationally (67% vs. 42%).[31] Although the differences between the samples of parents were significant across all school levels, the differences were more pronounced among elementary school parents.

Figure 3b compares those LGBT parents in the survey whose child attended high school with a national sample of parents of 10th graders from the NCES Educational Longitudinal Survey.[32] The LGBT parents in our survey were more likely to be a member of the school's parent-teacher organization than parents of 10th graders nationally.[33,34] However, there were no differences between the groups in their level of activity: attending meetings and taking part in the organization's activities. LGBT parents were also more likely than parents in the national sample to participate in volunteer activity in their child's school.[35]

Parent-School Communication

Parents were also asked about the frequency with which they communicate with the school—both the school contacting the parents and the parents contacting the school. Tables 10 and 11 demonstrate the frequency with which parents have communicated with the school regarding their child's school performance and behavior and the parents' own involvement in school-related activities. Parents reported a higher frequency of communication with their child's school (both hearing from the school and contacting the school themselves) regarding volunteer work, their child's school program for the year and information on how to help their child at home with school work. Parents of elementary school children, in general, reported a higher frequency of communication with the school than other parents, with the exception of children's problem behavior and poor attendance about which they reported a lower frequency of communication (see Figures 4a and 4b).[36,37] Figures 5a and 5b compare LGBT parents of secondary school students with a national sample of parents of 10th graders from the NCES Educational Longitudinal Survey on parent-school communication.[38] Overall, LGBT parents reported a higher level of contact with school personnel about their child than parents from the national sample.[39,40] Specifically, LGBT parents reported a higher frequency of contact with the school (both hearing from school personnel and contacting the school) regarding their child's future education, their child's school program for the year and information on doing schoolwork with their child at home. LGBT parents reported a higher frequency of contact by the school about doing volunteer work and about their children's problem behavior. They also reported a higher frequency of contacting the school regarding their child's positive behavior or poor performance.

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Table 10. Parent-School Communication: School Contacting Parents

Since the beginning of this school year, how many times have you (or your partner) been contacted by the school about each of the following?

	None	Once or Twice	3 or 4 Times	5 or More Times
Your child's poor performance in school.	79%	14%	4%	3%
Your child's school program for this year.	38%	29%	15%	16%
Your child's poor attendance record at school.	95%	4%	1%	0%
Your child's problem behavior in school.	77%	16%	4%	3%
Your child's positive or good behavior in school.	40%	28%	20%	12%
Participating in school fund-raising activities or doing volunteer work.	19%	22%	25%	34%
Information on how to help your child at home with specific skills or homework.	41%	29%	16%	14%
Obtaining information for school records.	43%	51%	5%	2%
Your child's future education.	49%	36%	11%	4%
Your child was having problems with other students.	82%	14%	3%	1%
Attend parent-teacher conference or Back-to-School night.	94%	96%	93%	89%
Make a special trip to school at the start of the school year to talk to school personnel about your family. [a]	48%	58%	41%	27%

[a] Elementary School Group higher than other two groups.

Table 11. Parent-School Communication: Parents Contacting School

Since the beginning of this school year, how many times have you (or your partner) contacted the school about each of the following?

	None	Once or Twice	3 or 4 Times	5 or More Times
Your child's school program for this year.	32%	43%	17%	8%
Your child's poor attendance record at school.	95%	4%	1%	0%
Your child's problem behavior in school.	76%	16%	5%	3%
Your child's positive or good behavior in school.	59%	26%	10%	4%
Participating in school fund-raising activities or doing volunteer work.	28%	33%	20%	18%
Information on how to help your child at home with specific skills or homework.	34%	35%	21%	10%
Obtaining information for school records.	55%	40%	4%	1%
Your child's future education.	40%	42%	13%	5%
Your child was having problems with other students.	82%	14%	3%	1%

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**Figure 4a. Parent-School Communication by School Level:
Communication From School**

Your child's poor perfromance in school [a] — Elementary School 15%, Middle School 32%, High School 29%

Your child's school program for this year. [a] — Elementary School 67%, Middle School 53%, High School 58%

Your child's poor attendance record at school [b] — Elementary School 2%, Middle School 5%, High School 12%

Your child's positive or good behavior in school. [c] — Elementary School 65%, Middle School 59%, High School 46%

Participating in school fund-raising activities or doing volunteer work [a,b,c] — Elementary School 89%, Middle School 76%, High School 58%

Information on how to help your child at home with specific skills or homework [a,b] — Elementary School 67%, Middle School 51%, High School 41%

Legend: ■ Elementary School ▨ Middle School ▦ High School

Percentage of Parents Reporting Any Contact in the Past School Year

[a] Elementary School different from Middle School. [b] Elementary School different from High School.
[c] Middle School different from High School

**Figure 4b. Parent-School Communication by School Level:
Communication From Parent**

Your child's poor perfromance in school [a,b] — Elementary School 26%, Middle School 39%, High School 43%

Your child's poor attendance record at school [b] — Elementary School 2%, Middle School 5%, High School 12%

Participating in school fund-raising activities or doing volunteer work [a,b,c] — Elementary School 83%, Middle School 63%, High School 45%

Legend: ■ Elementary School ▨ Middle School ▦ High School

Percentage of Parents Reporting Any Contact in the Past School Year

[a] Elementary School different from Middle School. [b] Elementary School different from High School.
[c] Middle School different from High School

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**Figure 5a. Parent-School Communication: Comparison
Between LGBT Parents and National Sample of Parents**
School Contacted Parents

Percentage of Parents Reporting Any Contact
in the Past School Year
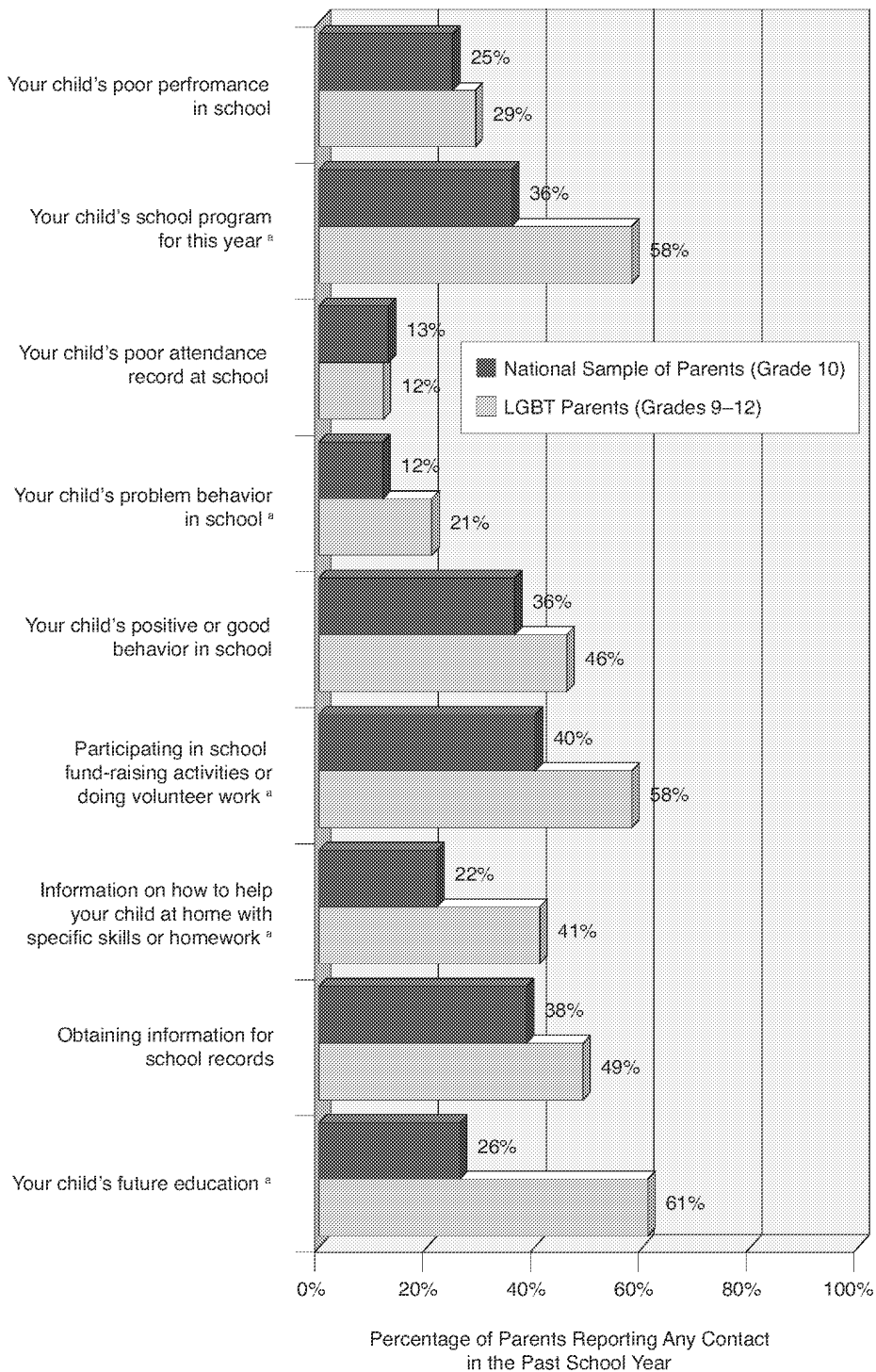
ª Groups significantly different, *p*<.01

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Figure 5b. Parent-School Communication: Comparison Between LGBT Parents and National Sample of Parents
Parents Contacted School

Your child's poor perfromance in school [a]
- National Sample: 30%
- LGBT: 43%

Your child's school program for this year [a]
- National Sample: 38%
- LGBT: 68%

Your child's poor attendance record at school
- National Sample: 11%
- LGBT: 12%

Your child's problem behavior in school
- National Sample: 11%
- LGBT: 18%

Your child's positive or good behavior in school [a]
- National Sample: 18%
- LGBT: 30%

Participating in school fund-raising activities or doing volunteer work
- National Sample: 30%
- LGBT: 45%

Information on how to help your child at home with specific skills or homework [a]
- National Sample: 30%
- LGBT: 52%

Obtaining information for school records
- National Sample: 41%
- LGBT: 43%

Your child's future education [a]
- National Sample: 27%
- LGBT: 72%

Legend:
- ■ National Sample of Parents (Grade 10)
- ▨ LGBT Parents (Grades 9–12)

X-axis: 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Percentage of Parents Reporting Any Contact in the Past School Year

[a] Groups significantly different, $p<.01$

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Parent-Child Involvement Regarding Education

Parents were asked specifically about their involvement in their children's education, such as checking their child's homework, discussing their child's report card or problems he or she may be having in school. As shown in Table 12, about two-thirds of parents reported that they always checked their child's homework and discussed problems their child was having with other students in school. Nearly all parents reported that they always discussed their child's report card, knew the whereabouts of their child when he or she was not at home and enforced curfews on school nights. This level of reported involvement was not significantly different from nationally available data of K–12 parents.[41] Elementary school parents were more likely to check their child's homework than middle school and high school parents (see Table 13).[42] With regard to discussing problems with other students—elementary school parents were not significantly different than middle school parents but both these groups reported a higher frequency than high school parents.

The majority of LGBT parents reported that they have discussions with their child about what he or she is learning in school (see Table 14)—with nearly all parents reporting that they have these discussions frequently or often. In contrast, LGBT parents reported a lower frequency of discussing what their child is learning in school related to LGBT people, with only about a quarter of parents reporting these discussions frequently or often (see also Table 14). Elementary school parents were more likely than other parents to discuss what their child is learning in general than other parents. However, elementary school parents were less likely to discuss what their child is learning related to LGBT people than middle and high school parents (see Table 15).[43]

Table 12. Parental Involvement in Child's Education

How often do you (or your partner)…

	Never	Seldom	Usually	Always
Check that your child has completed all homework?	1%	7%	30%	62%
Discuss your child's report card with him/her?	1%	2%	7%	90%
Know where your child is when he/she is not at home or in school?	0%	0%	8%	91%
Make and enforce curfews for your child on school nights?	2%	1%	10%	87%
Discuss problems you child is having with other students at school?	6%	6%	18%	70%

Table 13. Parental Involvement in Child's Education by School Level

How often do you (or your partner)…

	Percent Reporting "Always"		
	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Check that your child has completed all homework? [a]	80%	48%	23%
Discuss your child's report card with him/her?	88%	97%	88%
Know where your child is when he/she is not at home or in school? [b]	97%	91%	74%
Make and enforce curfews for your child on school nights?	88%	90%	81%
Discuss problems you child is having with other students at school? [b]	74%	74%	53%

[a] Elementary School group higher than other two groups.
[b] High School group lower than other two groups.

Table 14. Parent-Child Discussions about School

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Often
In general, how often do you talk with your child about what she or he is learning in school?	0%	<1%	5%	28%	68%
How often do you talk with your child about what she or he is learning in school related to LGBT people?	17%	26%	34%	13%	9%

Table 15. Parent-Child Discussions about School by School Level

	Percent Reporting "Frequently" or "Often"		
	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
In general, how often do you talk with your child about what she or he is learning in school? [a]	98%	95%	87%
How often do you talk with your child about what she or he is learning in school related to LGBT people? [b]	18%	30%	30%

[a] High School group lower than other two groups.
[b] Elementary School group lower than other two groups.

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Parent-School Engagement
Regarding LGBT Family Issues

Previous research has shown that when the children of lesbian or gay parents enter school, the family must contend with how their family configuration counters the norm—they may find that families like theirs are invisible or not represented and may even encounter representations that their family configuration is deviant.[44] Yet, results from our study on parental involvement illustrate that LGBT parents may be as likely or even more likely to be involved in their child's education than parents generally and that LGBT parents may also be proactive in addressing issues related to their particular family constellation. Nevertheless, a number of parents in our survey reported that they did not feel acknowledged or accepted by school personnel. As shown in Table 16, 15% of LGBT parents reported that they felt like school personnel did not acknowledge their type of family at least some of the time with this percentage being even higher for middle and high school parents.[45] Similarly, 16% of LGBT parents also reported that they felt they could not participate fully in their child's school community. As shown in Table 17, parents of children attending public schools and private religious schools were more likely to feel disenfranchised from the school community than parents from non-religious private schools.[46]

Parents were asked how comfortable they would be talking to school personnel about their family as well as how often they had actually discussed being an LGBT parent with school personnel. Overall, parents in the survey reported high levels of comfort with school personnel—two-thirds or more reported that they would be very comfortable discussing their family with teachers, the principal, school counselor and other staff (see Figure 6). Although these findings were consistent across school level (elementary, middle and high school), there were differences regarding the type of school the child attended. As shown in Table 18, parents of non-religious private school students reported higher levels of comfort discussing family issues with school personnel than other parents.[47] With the exception of comfort with the principal, public school parents reported higher levels of comfort with school staff than parents of children in religious private schools.

Although many LGBT parents in the study reported frequent communication with school personnel and were comfortable discussing LGBT issues with them, actual discussions about LGBT issues were most commonly had with teachers and the principal. As shown in Table 19, about two-thirds (67%) of parents reported that they had spoken with teachers at their child's school about being an LGBT parent and nearly half (45%) reported discussions with the principal in the past year. In contrast, less than a third had reported discussions with the school counselor and less than a quarter with other school personnel, such as the school psychologist, nurse or librarian. Parents of elementary school students and of students attending non-religious private schools were typically more likely to

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have discussed LGBT family issues with teachers, the principal and the school librarian than other parents (see Tables 20 and 21).[48]

Feeling excluded from the school community could have serious implications for the quality of the family-school connection—parents may not have the same access to resources and information related to their child's education compared to parents who feel more a part of the school community. We examined whether parents who reported feeling excluded from their child's school more frequently, either not being acknowledged as an LGBT family or not being able to participate fully in school activities, reported different levels of participation in school activities and communication with school personnel than other parents.[49] As shown in Figure 7a, parents who reported a high frequency of feeling that their family was not fully acknowledged by the school had a lower frequency of contact from the school about their child's education.[50] Similarly, parents who

Table 16. Parental Beliefs about School Acceptance by School Level

In the past 12 months, how often have you….?

Felt like school personnel don't acknowledge your type of family? [a]

	Total	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Frequently, Often or Sometimes	15%	12%	20%	21%
Frequently	3%	3%	3%	4%
Often	4%	4%	3%	6%
Sometimes	8%	5%	14%	11%
Rarely	7%	6%	10%	6%
Never	78%	82%	70%	73%

Felt that you are not able to fully participate in your child's school community because you are an LGBT parent? [b]

	Total	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Frequently, Often or Sometimes	16%	14%	24%	17%
Frequently	4%	4%	4%	5%
Often	5%	4%	6%	7%
Sometimes	7%	6%	14%	5%
Rarely	8%	6%	8%	13%
Never	76%	80%	69%	70%

[a] Elementary school group significantly lower than other groups.
[b] Groups not significantly different.

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reported a high frequency of feeling that they were not able to participate fully in their child's school because of being LGBT parents also had a lower frequency of contact from the school (see Figure 7b).[51] Yet there was no relationship between feelings of exclusion and the frequency with which parents contacted the school about their child's education (see also Figures 7a and 7b). Parents' beliefs about acceptance and inclusion of school personnel may be informed by a lack of contact from the school. However, it may also be that this lack of contact is an indicator of a less welcoming environment for LGBT families, and LGBT parents from these schools may be denied resources and information about their child's education relative to other parents.

Parents who did not feel fully able to participate in their child's school community were also less likely to participate in certain school activities. As shown in Figure 8, parents who reported more often feeling excluded from the school in this way were much less likely to have been involved in the parent-teacher organization and to volunteer at school.[52] These parents were also less likely to belong to other community groups with parents from their child's school.

Table 17. Parental Beliefs about School Acceptance by School Type

In the past 12 months, how often have you….?

Felt like school personnel don't acknowledge your type of family? [a]

	Total	Public	Private–Religious	Private Other
Frequently, Often or Sometimes	15%	17%	20%	3%
Frequently	3%	3%	3%	0%
Often	4%	5%	3%	0%
Sometimes	8%	9%	14%	3%
Rarely	7%	8%	10%	5%
Never	78%	75%	70%	92%

Felt that you are not able to fully participate in your child's school community because you are an LGBT parent? [a]

	Total	Public	Private–Religious	Private Other
Frequently, Often or Sometimes	16%	17%	30%	7%
Frequently	4%	4%	8%	0%
Often	5%	6%	11%	1%
Sometimes	7%	7%	11%	6%
Rarely	8%	9%	5%	4%
Never	76%	74%	66%	89%

[a] Private school group significantly lower than other two groups

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Table 18. Parents' Comfort in Talking with School Personnel by School Type [a]

In general, how comfortable would you be talking to school personnel about your family?

| | Percent Reporting Very or Somewhat Comfortable | | | |
	Total	Public	Private– Religious	Private Other
Your child's teacher [a]	88%	88%	69%	97%
Your child's guidance counselor [a]	89%	89%	77%	97%
Your child's principal [b]	85%	84%	69%	96%
Other school staff (e.g., school nurse) [a]	86%	85%	68%	98%

[a] All groups significantly different.

[b] Private-Other significantly different from Public and Private-Religious.

Table 19. Parents' Talking with School Personnel about LGBT Issues

For each of the following types of school staff, please indicate how many times you have talked with each one about being an LGBT parent in the previous school year.

	None	Once	2 to 5 Times	More than 5 Times
Teachers	33%	23%	38%	6%
Principal	55%	24%	17%	4%
Guidance Counselor	70%	15%	12%	3%
Psychologist	83%	9%	6%	2%
Nurse	88%	9%	3%	0%
Librarian or Other Resource Staff	83%	10%	7%	2%

Figure 6. Parents' Comfort Talking with School Personnel

In general, how comfortable would you be talking to school personnel about your family?
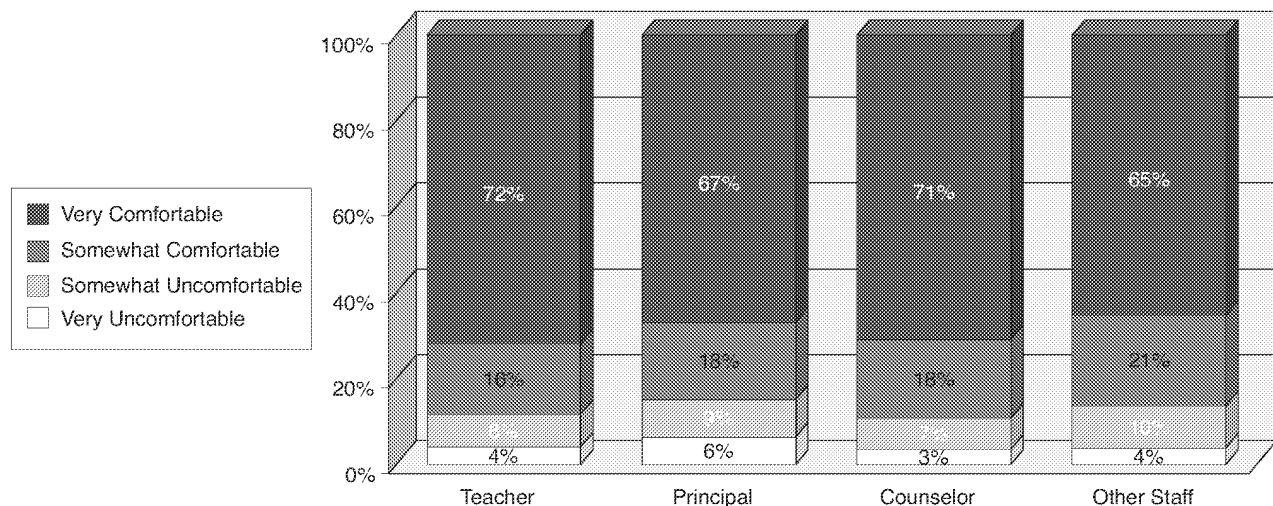
38

Table 20. Parents' Talking with School Personnel about LGBT Issues by School Level

For each of the following types of school staff, please indicate
how many times you have talked with each one about being an
LGBT parent in the previous school year.

Percent Reporting One or More Occurrence

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Teachers [a]	79%	56%	45%
Principal [b]	50%	46%	28%
Guidance Counselor [c]	24%	39%	35%
Psychologist [d]	15%	20%	17%
Nurse [d]	14%	12%	7%
Librarian or Other Resource Staff [a]	23%	13%	6%

[a] Elementary School group higher than other two groups.
[b] High School group lower than other two groups.
[c] Elementary School group lower than other two groups.
[d] Groups not significantly different.

Table 21. Parents' Talking with School Personnel about LGBT Issues by School Type

For each of the following types of school staff, please indicate
how many times you have talked with each one about being an
LGBT parent in the previous school year.

Percent Reporting One or More Occurrence

	Public	Private– Religious	Private– Other
Teachers [a]	66%	51%	81%
Principal [a]	42%	44%	62%
Guidance Counselor [b]	31%	13%	29%
Psychologist [b]	17%	13%	13%
Nurse [c]	14%	3%	6%
Librarian or Other Resource Staff [a]	15%	13%	32%

[a] Private School group higher than other two groups.
[b] Groups not significantly different.
[c] Public School group higher than other two groups.

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Figure 7a. Parents' Feelings of Exclusion and Contact with School: Not Fully Acknowledged by School
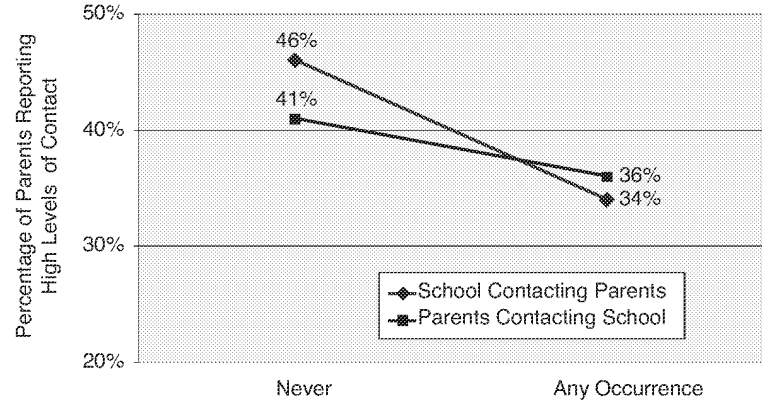

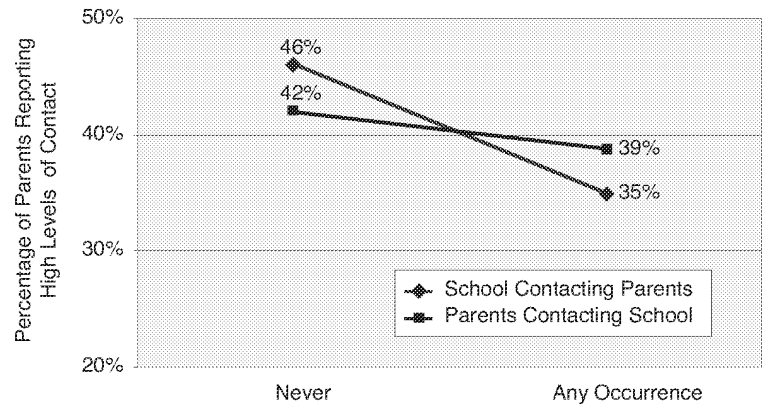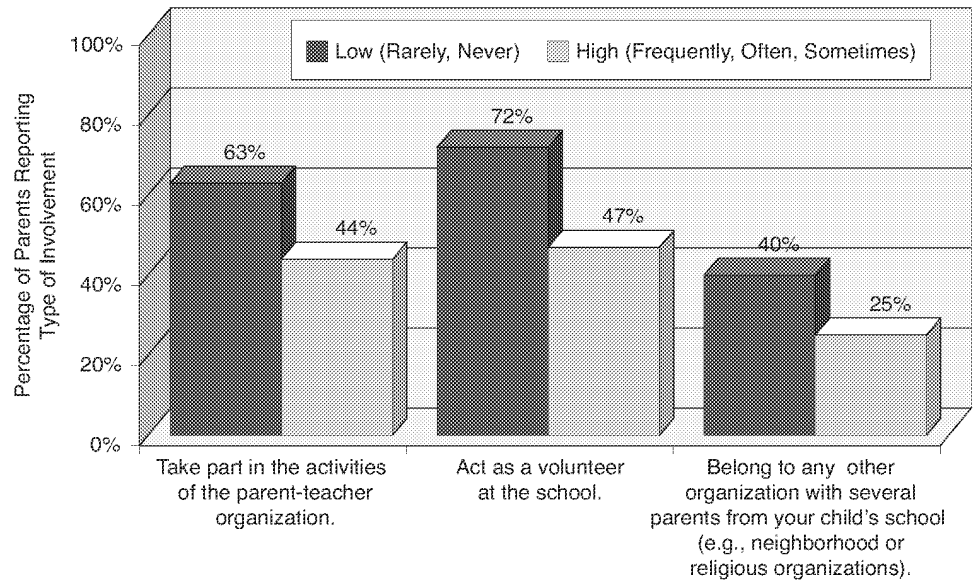**Figure 7b. Parents' Feelings of Exclusion and Contact with School: Not Feeling Able to Participate Fully in School**

Figure 8. Parents' Feelings of Exclusion and School Involvement: Not Feeling Able to Participate Fully in School

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Notes

26 For a review of this literature, see: Henderson, A. T. & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement.* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

27 To compare differences across school level, a series of Chi-square tests were performed. Given the large number of variables, a more restrictive p-value was employed, $p<.01$. Attend parent-teacher org.: $\chi^2=25.51$, Cramer's V=.21; Take part parent-teacher org.: $\chi^2=54.77$, Cramer's V=.31; Volunteer: $\chi^2=60.94$, Cramer's V=.33. All significant, $p<.01$, $df=2$. Post-hoc differences across school types were tested with subsequent chi-square tests between pairs of school level.

28 To compare differences across school types, a series of Chi-square tests were performed. Given the large number of variables, a more restrictive p-value was employed, $p<.01$. Attend parent-teacher org.: $\chi^2=14.42$, Cramer's V=.16; Take part parent-teacher org.: $\chi^2=14.66$, Cramer's V=.16; Volunteer: $\chi^2=13.31$, Cramer's V=.15; All significant, $p<.01$, $df=2$. Post-hoc differences across school types were tested with subsequent chi-square tests between pairs of school types.

29 Vaden-Kiernan, N., and McManus, J. (2005). *Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2002–03* (NCES 2005–043). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

   Certain variables used in the LGBT parent survey were also used in the National Center for Education Statistics Parent and Family Involvement in Education Survey of the 2003 National Household Education Surveys Program: attending meetings of the parent-teacher organization, attending parent-teacher conference and acting as a volunteer in the school.

30 Using available population parameters from NCES, a one-sample Chi-square test was performed comparing the percentages from the GLSEN sample to the NCES sample: $\chi^2=97.03$, $p<.001$, $df=1$.

31 Using available population parameters from NCES, a one-sample Chi-square test was performed comparing the percentages from the GLSEN sample to the NCES sample: $\chi^2=153.97$, $p<.001$, $df=1$.

32 Given the relatively small number of parents whose children attended any high school grade, it was not feasible to compare the parents of 10th graders in our survey with the national survey of parents of 10th graders. Although parental involvement may vary across grades within high school, we believe that differences across high school grades would be small relative to parental involvement between high school parents and elementary school and middle school parents. For this reason, we compared the national sample of 10th grade parents to all LGBT parents in the survey with children in high school.

33 Education Longitudinal Study: 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System. (First follow-up) [ECB/CD-ROM Public Use]. (2005). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Services [Producer and Distributor].

34 Using publicly available data from the 2002 baseline data from the NCES Educational Longitudinal Study, we compared the national set of 10th grade parents with the LGBT parents of secondary school students (grades 9 to 12): $\chi^2=12.22$, $p<.001$, $df=1$.

35 $\chi^2=12.22$, $p<.001$, $df=1$. $\chi^2=10.22$, $p<.001$, $df=1$.

36 Differences between groups were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.29, F(20,888)=7.5, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.

37 Differences between groups were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.25, F(18,1020)=8.0, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.

38 Education Longitudinal Study: 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System. (First follow-up) [ECB/CD-ROM Public Use]. (2005). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Services [Producer and Distributor].

39 Differences between the GLSEN and national samples in the frequency of contact were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.01, F(9,11775)=13.6, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.

40 Differences between the GLSEN and national samples in the frequency of contact were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.02, F(9,11591)=23.4, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.

41 Vaden-Kiernan, N., and McManus, J. (2005). *Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2002–03* (NCES 2005–043). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

42 Differences between groups were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.31, $F(10,1058)=19.0$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.

43 Differences between groups were tested by a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. For both variables, the group differences were significantly different: general "talking about learning" – $F(2,578)=28.7$, $p<.001$; LGBT-related "talking about learning" - $F(2,576)=6.3$, $p<.01$ Post-hoc t-tests were considered at $p<.01$.

44 Casper, V., Schultz, S., & Wickens, E. (1992). Breaking the silences: Lesbian and gay parents and the schools. *Teachers College Record*, 94, 109137.

45 Differences between groups with a oneway analysis of variance (ANOVA) and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The group differences for "school personnel don't acknowledge" were significantly different: $F(2,578)=3.7$, $p<.05$. Post-hoc t-tests were considered at $p<.05$.

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46   Differences between groups with a series of oneway analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The group differences for "school personnel don't acknowledge" were significantly different, $F(2,569)=6.7$, $p<.001$, and for "not fully participate," $F(2,572)=7.0$, $p<.001$. Post-hoc t-tests were considered at $p<.05$.

47   Differences between groups were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.05, $F(8,1068)=3.6$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.

48   Differences between groups were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. For school level, the multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.15, $F(12,1038)=6.5$, $p<.001$. For school type, the multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.10, $F(12,1038)=4.7$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.

49   Given that we were primarily interested in overall contact to/from school, we computed two overall contact variables taking the mean of the variables regarding the school contacting parents and the mean of the variables regarding parents contacting the school. To examine the relationship between frequency of contact to and from the school and feelings of exclusion (not being fully able to participate and feeling not fully acknowledged), we examined the Pearson correlations among the scale variables.

50   Contact From: Pearson $r=-.17$, $p<.001$. Contact To: Pearson $r=-.05$, NS. Percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The two exclusion variables were each dummy coded into any occurrence ("Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," and "Frequently") and no occurrence ("Never"). The contact variables were split at the means to create high/low contact.("contact from school": X= 1.60; "contact to school": X=1.70).

51   Contact From: Pearson $r=-.13$, $p<.001$. Contact To: Pearson $r=.02$, NS.

52   To examine the relationship between parents' feelings of exclusion and school involvement, a series of Chi-square tests were performed given the involvement variables were dichotomous. A more conservative significant level was used ($p<.01$) because of the number of tests required. The chi-square analysis was significant for: active in parent-teacher organization – $\chi^2=11.7$, $p<.001$, $df=1$, $\phi=.14$; volunteering at school – $\chi^2=20.9$, $p<.001$, $df=1$, $\phi=.19$; participation in other organizations – $\chi^2=8.2$, $p<.001$, $df=1$, $\phi=.12$.

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AR_283633

## Students' Safety in School

Parental Concerns about Child Safety in School

Although many parents, in general, worry about their child's safety in school with regard to bullying and harassment, LGBT parents may have further concerns about their child's safety in school because of societal attitudes toward LGBT people and LGBT parents specifically. For these reasons, we asked parents about their concerns for their child's safety in school, both general concerns as well as concerns that their child will have problems in school or be excluded from peers because of having LGBT parents. As shown in Table 22, more than two-thirds (66%) of parents reported that they had ever worried about their child's general safety in school, with over a quarter (29%) reporting that they worried at least some of the time. A higher percentage of parents worried that their child might have problems in school because of having an LGBT parent—over half of the parents (57%) reported this concern at least some of the time. Nearly half of the parents (48%) also reported that they worried at least sometimes about whether their child would have problems making friends or being excluded from peers because of having an LGBT parent (see also Table 22). Although elementary school parents, on average, worried less frequently about their child's safety in general, it was the high school parents who were least often concerned about their child experiencing LGBT-related harassment and being excluded from peers because of having LGBT parents than other parents (see Figure 9).[53] Overall, parents of children attending non-religious private schools least often were worried about their child's well-being at school.[54]

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| Table 22. Parental Concerns about Their Child's Experiences in School: Safety, Bullying and Peer Relations					
	Never	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**Frequently**
How often do you worry that your child is safe in school?	34%	37%	22%	5%	2%
How often do you worry that your child will have problems in school because of having LGBT parents?	13%	30%	41%	12%	4%
How often do you worry that your child will have problems making friends in school or being excluded from classmates because of having LGBT parents?	20%	32%	35%	10%	3%

LGBT parents may have greater concern about their child's welfare in school than parents in general. According to a Gallup Poll conducted around the same time as our parent survey (August 8–11, 2005), only about a fifth (21%) of parents with a child in K–12 school reported that they feared for their child's physical safety at school.[55] This national percentage is far lower than the two-thirds (66%) of LGBT parents who ever reported worrying about their child's safety in school and lower than the more conservative percentage of parents who reported worrying at least sometimes (29% reported "sometimes," "often" or "frequently").[56] It is important to note that the question from Gallup and that from GLSEN were slightly different—Gallup asked specifically about physical safety whereas we did not. Nevertheless, the finding may demonstrate that LGBT parents are highly concerned about their child's safety in school. It is possible that LGBT parents are simply more concerned parents and this heightened concern has nothing to do with their family form. However, given the high percentage of LGBT parents who are specifically concerned about their child having problems in school because of their family constellation, it is also possible that this heightened sense of concern regarding school safety is because these parents anticipate the child being a likelier target for bullying and harassment because of having LGBT parents.

Figure 9. Parental Worries about Child Safety in School
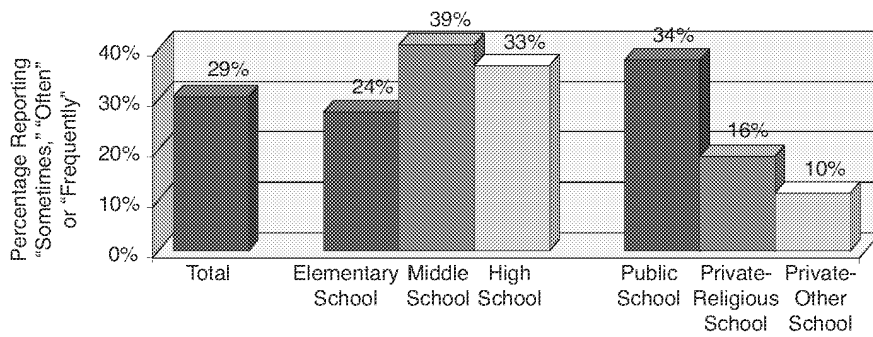
How often do you worry that your child is safe in school? [a]
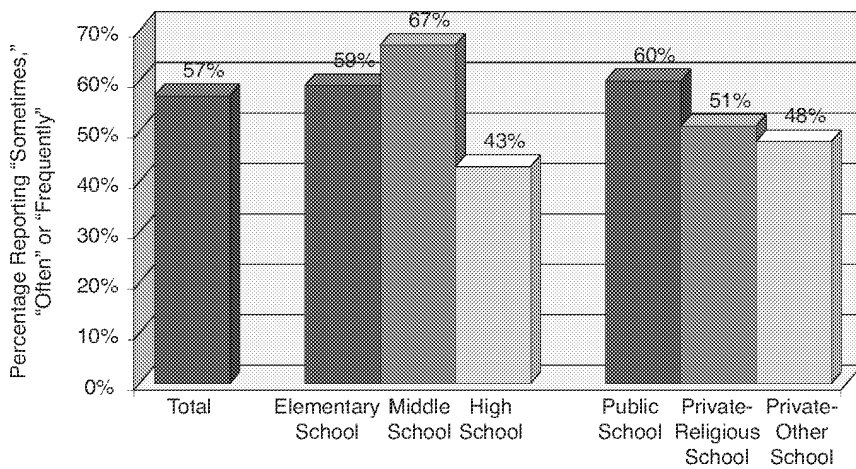
How often do you worry that your child will have problems in school because of having LGBT parents? [b]
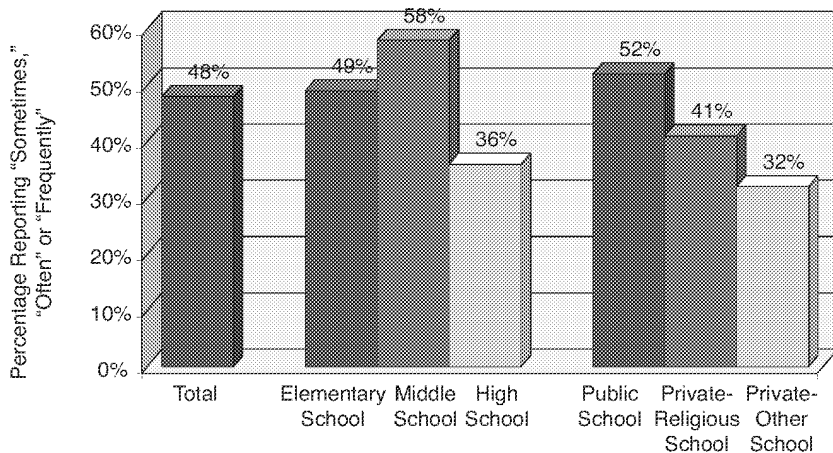
How often do you worry that your child will have problems making friends in school or being excluded from classmates because of having LGBT parents? [b]

[a] Elementary group significantly lower than other two groups. Public school group significantly higher than other two groups. [b] High school group significantly lower than other two groups. Private – Other group significantly lower than Public School group.

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AR_283636

Students' Reports on General Safety in School

In order to better understand the safety concerns of children from LGBT families, we asked students about their own feelings of safety in school, both general feelings of safety and safety based on specific personal characteristics, such as their family constellation, gender expression (i.e., how traditionally "masculine" or "feminine" they were), gender, and actual or perceived sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, disability and religion. Half (51%) of all students said they felt unsafe at school because of any of these characteristics, with family constellation and actual or perceived sexual orientation being the most commonly reported reasons for feeling unsafe. As shown in Figure 10, nearly a quarter (23%) felt unsafe at school because they had an LGBT parent, and a fifth (21%) felt unsafe because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Almost a fifth (16%) of the students in our study felt unsafe at school because of how they expressed their gender. Some students also reported feeling unsafe at school because of their gender (10%), or their actual or perceived religion (9%), race/ethnicity (6%) or a disability (3%).

Attending a school that does not provide a safe learning environment may lead to greater absenteeism among students who do not feel safe. Nearly a fifth of the students in this study said they had skipped a class at least one time (15%) or missed at least one day of school (17%) in the past month because they felt unsafe at school.

Compared to a national sample of the general student population, students with LGBT parents were much more likely to indicate that they were made to feel unsafe in school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation (21% v. 6%), gender (10% v. 2%), how they expressed their gender (16% v. 8%), and their actual or perceived religion (10% v. 5%).[57] These differences may be indicative of experiences that are unique to youth with LGBT parents, experiences that their peers may not encounter when at school.

Figure 10. Percentage of Students Who Felt Unsafe at School
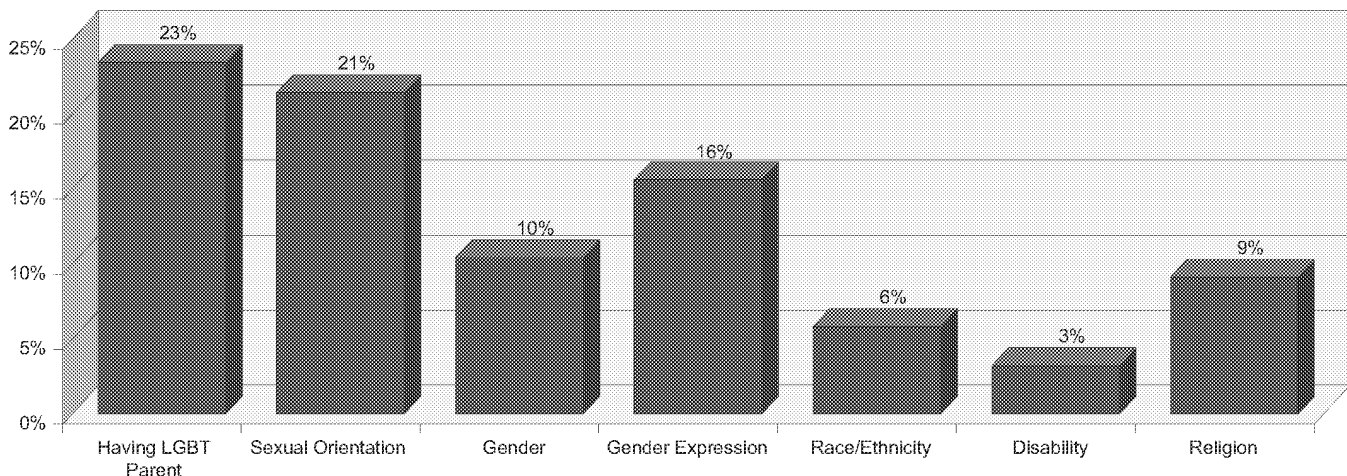
Notes

53   Differences across elementary, middle and high schools were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance with the three worry-related dependent variables. Percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.06, $F(6,1150)=6.3$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects and post-hoc group comparisons were considered at $p<.01$.

54   Differences across school type were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance with the three worry-related dependent variables. Percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The multivariate effect was significant, Pillai's trace=.07, $F(6,1152)=6.8$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects and post-hoc group comparisons were considered at $p<.01$.

55   Gallup (2007). Gallup's pulse of democracy: Education. Retrieved September 13, 2007, from http://www.galluppoll.com/content/default.aspx?ci=1612.

56   Chi-square goodness of fit test was used to compare the percentages of parents in the LGBT Family study with the percentages of parents from the national population on parental worry about child safety in school. The percentage of LGBT parents who ever worried about their child's safety in school was significantly higher than the percentage of the general population of parents who worried about their child's physical safety in school: $\chi^2=724.4$, $df=1$, $p<.001$. The percentage of LGBT parents who worried more often was also significantly higher than that of the general population: $\chi^2=21.0$, $df=1$, $p<.001$.

57   Harris Interactive, Inc. & GLSEN Study: 2005 Data File. New York: GLSEN. Chi-square nonparametric test was used to compare the percentages of students in the LGBT Family study who reported feeling unsafe with the percentages of students from the national population. Sexual orientation: $\chi^2=64.9$, $df=1$, $p<.001$. Gender: $\chi^2=55.3$, $df=1$, $p<.001$. Gender expression: $\chi^2=12.0$, $df=1$, $p<.01$. Religion: $\chi^2=5.4$, $df=1$, $p<.05$.

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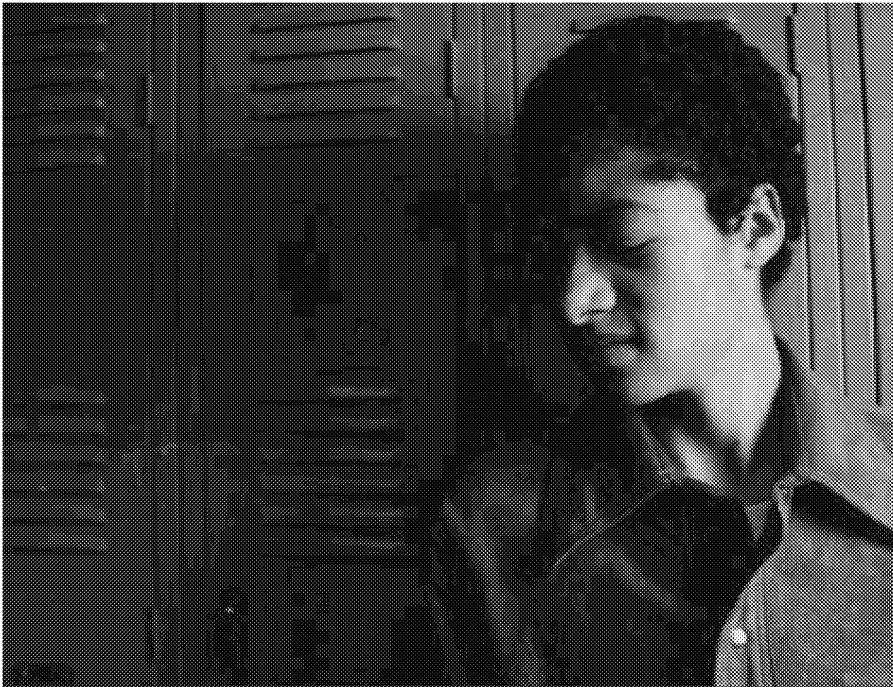
Students' Negative School Experiences

Although there is a growing body of literature documenting safety issues, such as bullying and harassment, in U.S. schools, little is known about the school experiences of youth who have an LGBT parent or guardian. In order to better understand the school experiences of students from LGBT families, we asked students a range of questions about their safety and comfort at school, including their exposure to biased language and their experiences of bullying, harassment and other forms of mistreatment.

Biased Language at School

Hearing biased language at school is an important indicator of the nature and quality of a school's environment for students. Thus, students were asked about the frequency of hearing homophobic, racist and sexist remarks at schools, hearing negative remarks about how people expressed their gender, and hearing negative remarks about LGBT parents and families.

Biased Language from Students. Figure 11 shows the frequency of the different types of biased language made by other students in school. Sexist remarks (e.g., hearing someone called a "bitch" in a derogatory way) and homophobic remarks were the most frequent types of biased language that students reported hearing at school. As shown in Figure 11, almost three-quarters (72%) of students reported hearing sexist remarks "often" or "frequently" at school." Although not usually considered as derogatory as terms such as "faggot" the expressions "that's so gay" and "you're so gay" are often used to refer to someone or something as "stupid" or worthless. Three-quarters of

49

Figure 11. Frequency of Hearing Biased Remarks at School
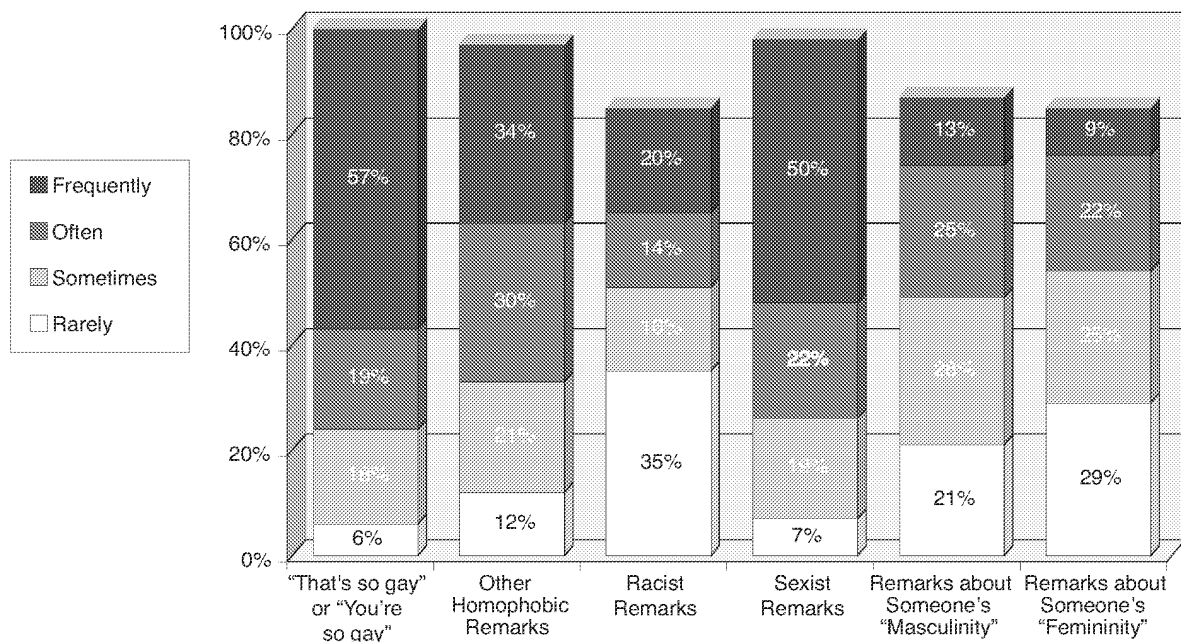
students in our survey indicated that they heard these expressions often or frequently in school. With regard to more blatantly derogatory homophobic remarks, almost two-thirds (64%) heard remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" often or frequently. Many students also reported hearing negative remarks regarding gender expression at school, such as comments about a student not acting "masculine" or "feminine" enough—about a third heard these comments often or frequently. In addition, a sizable percentage of students reported hearing racist remarks (e.g., "nigger" or "spic") at school—about a third (34%) of students reported hearing such remarks often or frequently.

In addition to the frequency of this language in school, we also asked students about the pervasiveness of biased language use—how many students make these types of remarks in school.[58] Many students reported hearing sexist and homophobic remarks from "most" of their peers (43% and 32%, respectively). Smaller percentages of students heard negative remarks about gender expression (21%) and racist remarks (17%) from most of the students at their school.

Although homophobic remarks could add to a negative environment for students with LGBT parents in that it relates to their parent or parents, it is possible that members of the school community make negative remarks specifically about having lesbian or gay parents. For this reason, we asked students how often they heard these types of remarks in school. Although these types of remarks were less common than other types of biased remarks, 18% of students had heard negative remarks about having an LGBT parent often or

50

frequently while at school (see Figure 12). With regard to the prevalence of these comments among the student body, about a tenth of students (11%) reported that they heard these types of comments from most of the students in their school.

In order to examine whether the school experiences of students with LGBT parents were similar to the experiences of the general population of secondary school students, we compared results from this sample to findings from a recent study that examined the experiences of the general student with issues related to school climate.[59] There were some important differences between the general student population and students from LGBT families with regard to their reports about biased language in school. Students from LGBT families were more likely to report that they frequently heard homophobic (64% v. 52%), sexist (72% v. 51%), and racist remarks (34% v. 26%) at school.[60] These differences may, in part, be due to the differences in sample demographics. For example, there were higher percentages of female students in the sample of students with LGBT parents than in the sample from the general population, and female students may be more likely to be aware of sexist language use in their schools.

Biased Language from School Staff. Any degree of biased or derogatory language from school staff should be considered unacceptable and not tolerated in our schools. Hearing biased language from teachers or other school authority figures may send a message to students that such language use is to be tolerated and possibly acceptable. Unfortunately, many students said they heard teachers or other school personnel use sexist, homophobic, and racist language at school, as shown in Figure 13.

Similar to students' reports regarding biased language from students, sexist remarks were the most frequently heard type of biased language—about half (49%) of students reported hearing school staff make sexist remarks. More than a third (39%) reported that school staff made homophobic remarks at school, and more than a quarter said they heard staff make negative comments about gender expression (30%), LGBT families (28%) and racist remarks (26%) in school.

Intervention by School Staff with Biased Language. While hearing biased remarks was a common occurrence in students' schools, according to students' reports intervention by school staff when such language was used in their presence was not. Only 59% of students reported that a teacher or other school staff frequently ("most of the time" or "always") intervened when hearing racist remarks, and less than half (42%) said staff frequently intervened when sexist remarks were made in their presence (see Figure 14). School staff were much less likely to intervene when hearing negative remarks about LGBT parents, homophobic remarks and negative remarks about gender expression. Only 38% of students reported that staff frequently intervened when hearing remarks about LGBT parents, less than a

Figure 12. "How often have you heard negative remarks about your family having an LGBT parent or parents?"

Rarely 27%
Sometimes 14%
Often 11%
Frequently 7%
Never 41%
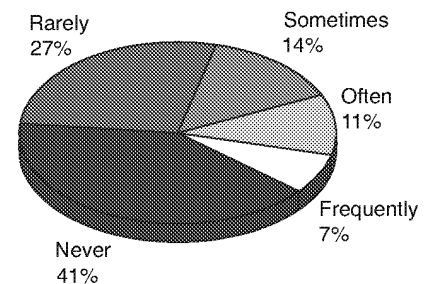
third (28%) of students said that school staff frequently intervened when hearing homophobic remarks, and less than a quarter (22%) indicated frequent staff intervention when remarks related to gender expression were made. Although students with LGBT families were more likely than the general population of secondary school students to report hearing racist remarks in school, they were also more likely report that school staff frequently intervened when racist remarks were made in their presence (59% v. 37%).[61]

Students' Experiences of Harassment and Assault

In addition to their overall feelings of safety at school, students were asked about their experiences of serious types of harassment at school. Although most students did not report experiencing difficulties at school, some experienced verbal harassment (e.g., called names or threatened), physical harassment (e.g., shoved or pushed) and assault (e.g., punched, kicked or injured with a weapon). In fact, for sizable percentages of students, family constellation, actual or perceived sexual orientation, and gender expression resulted in them being targeted for harassment and other mistreatment at school.

Students' Experiences of Verbal Harassment. As noted above, students often heard homophobic remarks and other kinds of biased language in school, and a substantial percentage of students heard negative remarks about having an LGBT parent—remarks that may or may not have been directed specifically at them. In addition to the frequency of hearing negative remarks in their school about LGBT parents, we also asked students about any incidents of verbal harassment they may have experienced, incidents in which behaviors such as name-calling or verbal threats were directed at them personally because they had an LGBT parent. As shown in Figure 15, 42% of students said they had been verbally harassed at school in the past year because their parents were LGBT. In addition to family constellation, students were asked about the frequency of experiencing verbal harassment based on other characteristics. Over a third (37%) of students reported that they had been verbally harassed because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and nearly a third had experienced verbal harassment because of their gender (30%) or the way in which they expressed their gender (33%). Fewer students reported that they had experienced verbal harassment based on their actual or perceived race/ethnicity (26%), a disability (18%) or religion (21%).

In addition to experiencing harassment based on having LGBT parents, some students from LGBT families may also experience difficulties at school in terms of their peers' assumptions or perceptions about their own sexual orientation. Specifically, some students may experience harassment in school because their peers believe that they are lesbian, gay or bisexual simply because they have an LGBT parent, regardless of their actual sexual orientation. As shown in Figure 16, more than a third of students in our study reported being

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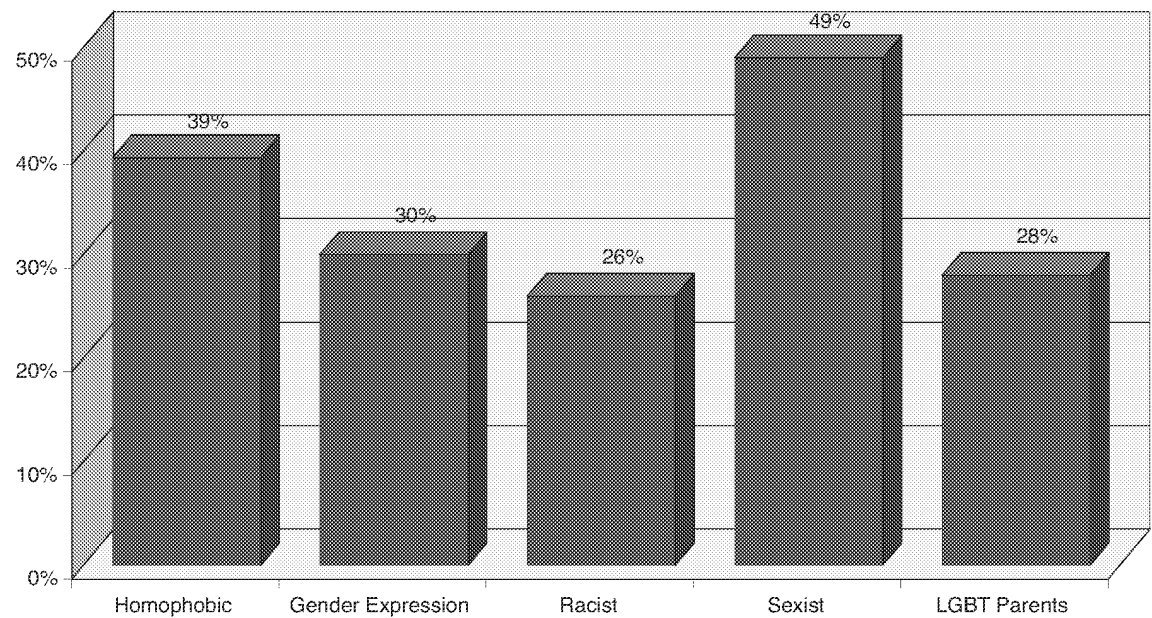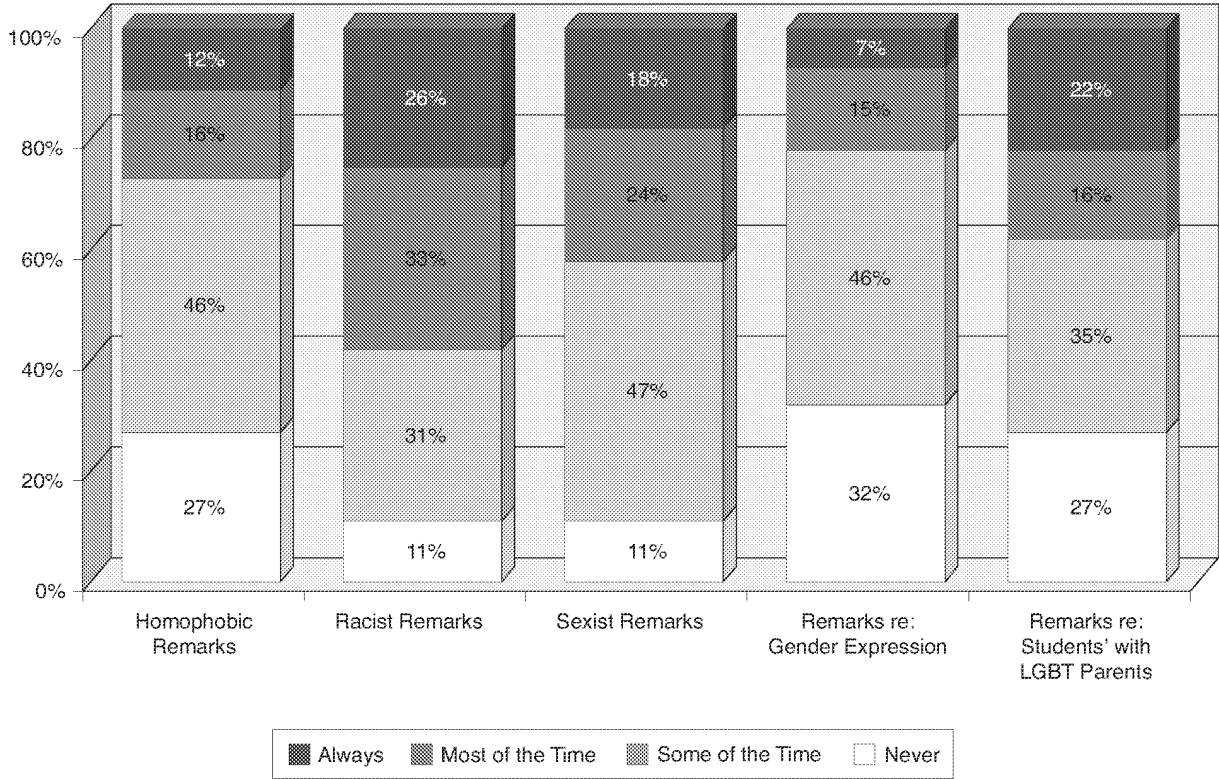**Figure 13. Percentage of Students Who Heard Biased Remarks From School Staff**

Category	Percentage
Homophobic	39%
Gender Expression	30%
Racist	26%
Sexist	49%
LGBT Parents	28%

Figure 14. Frequency of Intervention by School Staff When Hearing Biased Language in School

Category	Always	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never
Homophobic Remarks	12%	16%	46%	27%
Racist Remarks	26%	33%	31%	11%
Sexist Remarks	18%	24%	47%	11%
Remarks re: Gender Expression	7%	15%	46%	32%
Remarks re: Students' with LGBT Parents	22%	16%	35%	27%

Legend: ■ Always   ▨ Most of the Time   ▧ Some of the Time   ☐ Never

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verbally harassed in the past year because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. A fifth (21%) of all students had been verbally harassed at school both because of their family constellation and because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Being the target of frequent harassment can severely affect a student's access to her or his education. As shown in Figures 17a and 17b, students who reported high levels of harassment were much more likely to report that they missed classes or entire days of school because of feeling unsafe. For example, compared to students who were never or rarely harassed at school, students who experienced high levels of harassment because of having LGBT parents were more than three times as likely to miss classes (34% vs. 10%) and four times as likely to miss entire days of school (44% vs. 11%) because they feared for their safety.[62]

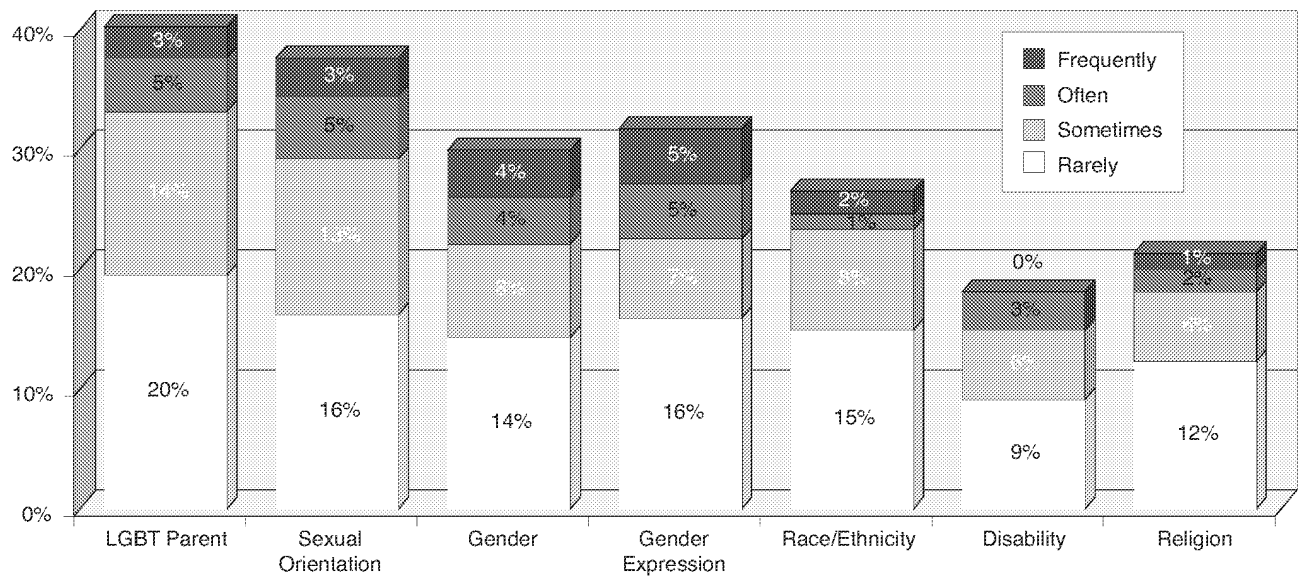**Figure 15. Frequency of Verbal Harassment in the Past Year**

Figure 16. Percentage of Students Experiencing Verbal Harassment Based on Family Constellation and/or Own Sexual Orientation
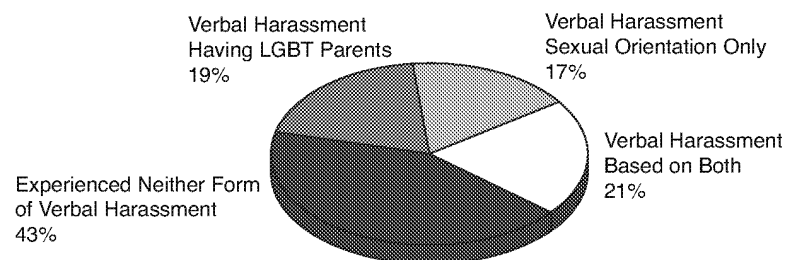

Verbal Harassment Having LGBT Parents 19%

Verbal Harassment Sexual Orientation Only 17%

Verbal Harassment Based on Both 21%

Experienced Neither Form of Verbal Harassment 43%

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Figure 17a. Relationship Between Severity of In-School Harassment and Missing Classes
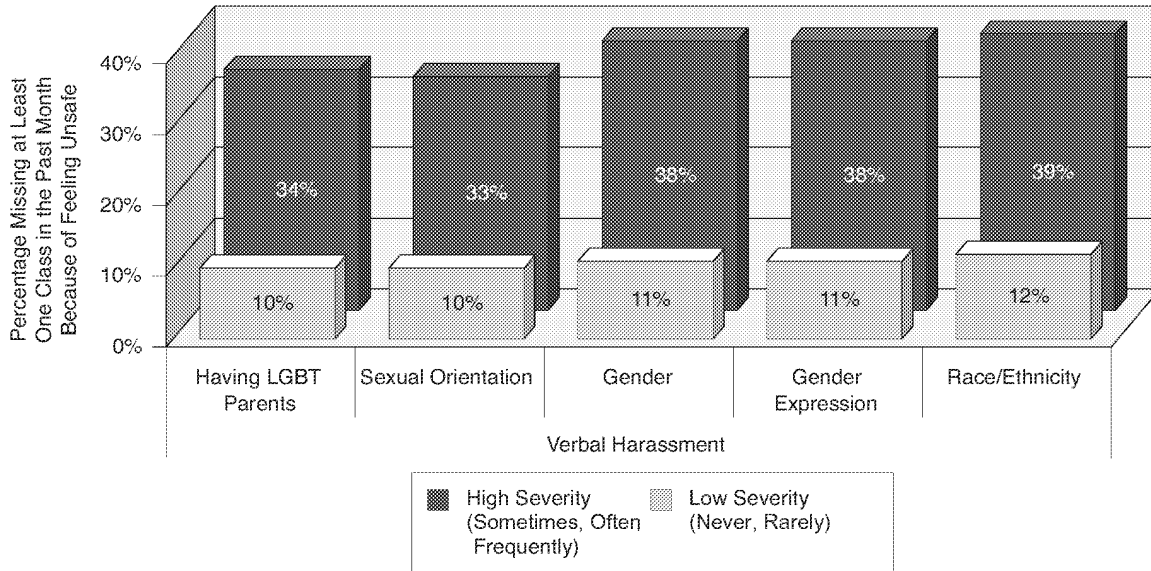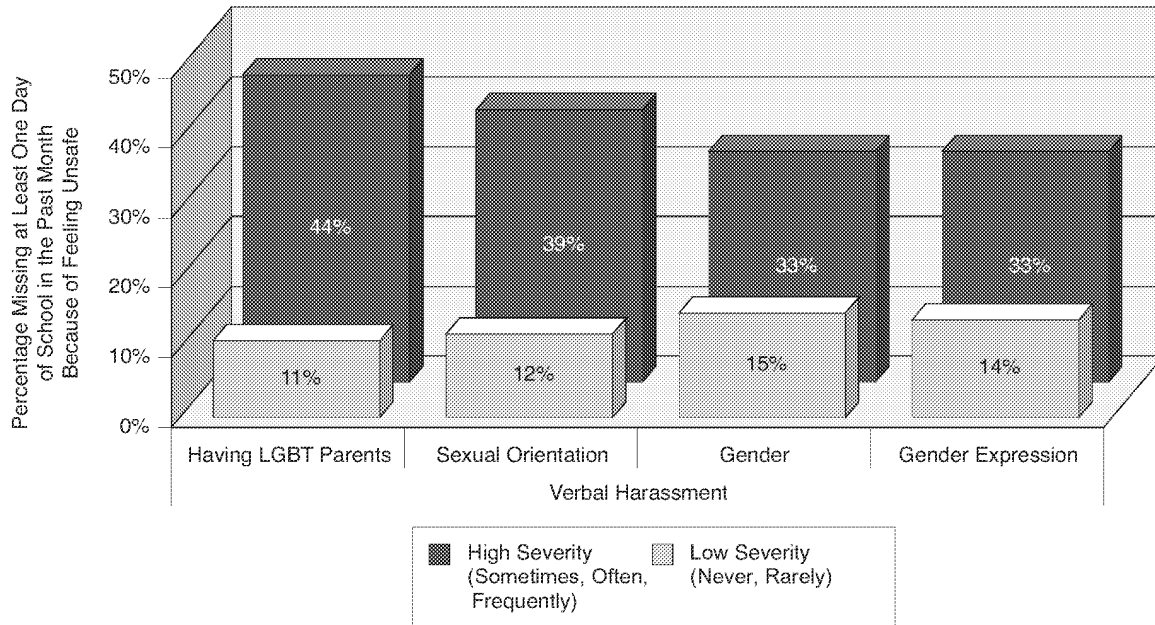(all differences statistically significant, *p*<.05)

Figure 17b. Relationship Between Severity of In-School Harassment and Missing Days of School
(all differences statistically significant, *p*<.05)

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Students' Experiences of Physical Harassment and Assault. For some students, experiences of victimization did not end with verbal offenses but escalated to physical harassment (e.g., being shoved or pushed) and assault (e.g., being punched or injured with a weapon). Although these events were not as common as verbal harassment, they were not uncommon.[63] As shown in Figure 18, about a tenth of students had been physically harassed or assaulted in the past year because they had LGBT parents (12%), because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation (11%) or because of their gender (11%) or gender expression (13%).

As with verbal harassment, students with LGBT parents may experience physical forms of harassment or assault because of having LGBT parents or because they themselves are LGBT or others assume that they are LGBT. As shown in Figure 19, nearly a fifth of students had reported either type of LGBT-related physical harassment or assault and 5% reported both.

Figure 18. Percentage of Students Physically Harassed or Assaulted in the Past Year
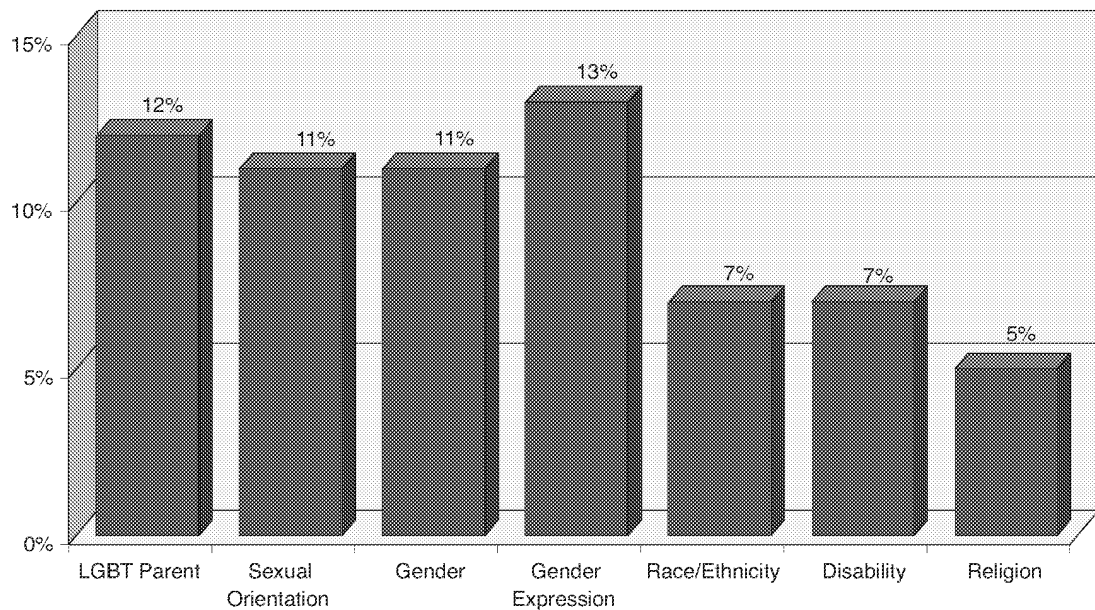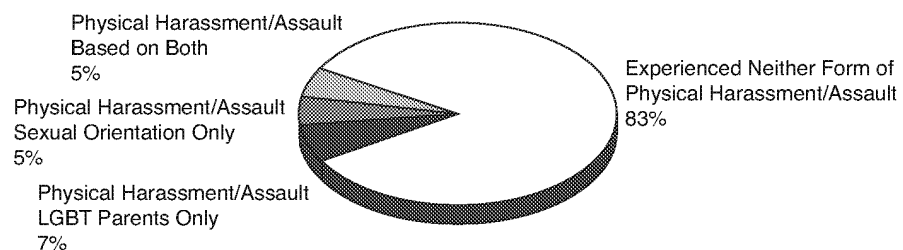

Figure 19. Percentage of Students Experiencing Physical Harassment or Assault Based on Family Constellation and/or Own Sexual Orientation

Physical Harassment/Assault Based on Both 5%

Physical Harassment/Assault Sexual Orientation Only 5%

Physical Harassment/Assault LGBT Parents Only 7%

Experienced Neither Form of Physical Harassment/Assault 83%

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Students' Experiences of Other Types of Harassment and Mistreatment by Their Peers

Students may also experience victimization events in school that are not clearly related to a personal characteristic. Unlike the previously discussed frequencies of verbal harassment and physical harassment and assault, students were not asked whether these types of harassment were specifically related to a personal characteristic. For example, a student may be the target of mean rumors or lies because of their sexual orientation or race or for no apparent reason. Thus, we asked students about other types of harassment they may have experienced at school, such as being sexually harassed or having their property deliberately damaged.

As Figure 20 illustrates, 40% of students had experienced sexual harassment (e.g., receiving sexual remarks or someone touching their body inappropriately) at school, and 43% had their property stolen or deliberately damaged at school in the past school year. Relational aggression—harm caused by damage to peer relationships—is a common type of harassment occurring in schools. The students in our survey were asked how often they had experienced one of the most common forms of relational aggression—the spreading of mean rumors or lies about a peer. Students were asked two questions with regard to rumors and lies: the first asked how often they had rumor/lies spread about them in general (or for no specific reason),

**Figure 20.** Frequency of Other Types of Harassment in the Past Year

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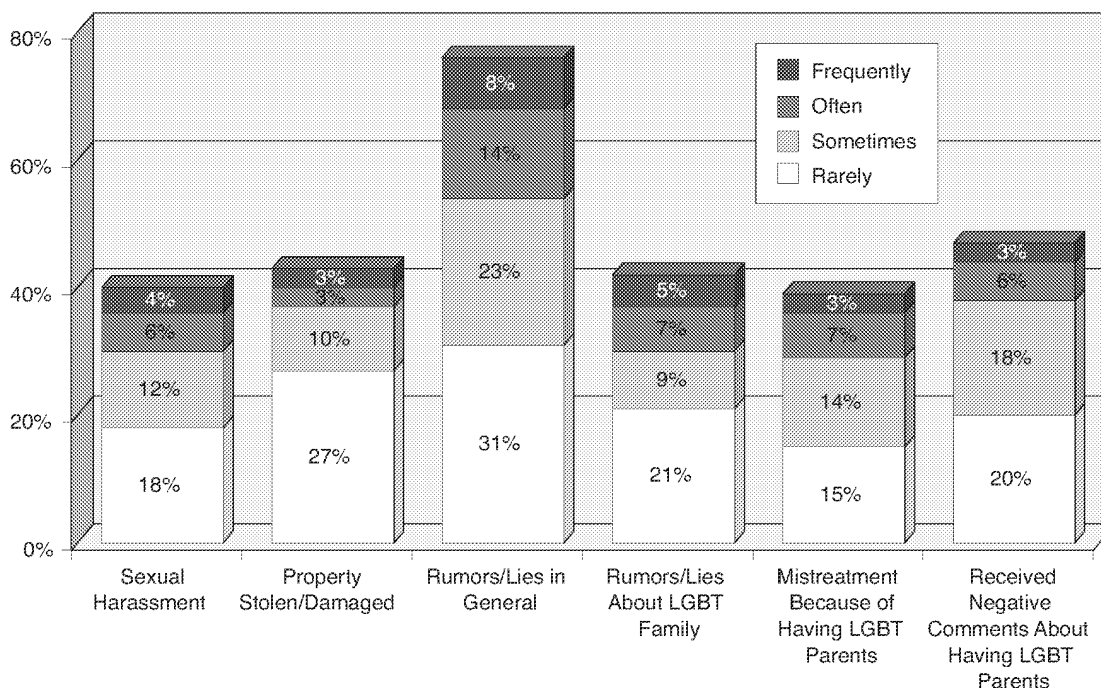
and the second asked how often they had rumor/lies spread about them specifically because they had an LGBT parent. Three-quarters (76%) had rumors or lies spread about them in general in the past year, and 22% said this had occurred often or frequently. Many students (42%) reporting having rumors or lies spread about them in school specifically because they had an LGBT parent (12% reporting often or frequently).

Students with LGBT parents may be subjected to other forms of mistreatment in school, mistreatment which they may not describe as being harassment or assault. In order to better understand the unique experiences of students with LGBT parents, they were asked how often they had experienced other kinds of mistreatment or received negative comments from their peers specifically because they had an LGBT parent. In addition, students were asked about other negative experiences they may have experienced, such as being excluded from classroom activities, because of their family structure. More than a third (40%) of the students had experienced mistreatment by other students at school specifically because they had an LGBT parent, and almost half (47%) had received negative comments from their peers for this reason (see Figure 20).

Demographic Differences in Students' School Experiences of Victimization

GLSEN's mission is to make all schools safe for all students. Whereas many students with LGBT parents experience harassment in school based on their family constellation or their actual or perceived sexual orientation, many experience further harassment based on other personal characteristics, such as race/ethnicity or gender. Thus, we examined whether there were differences in the experience of school climate based on sexual orientation, race/ethnicity and gender in order to understand more fully the experiences of students with LGBT parents.

Comparisons by Sexual Orientation. Students who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) were much more likely to report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation (57% vs. 13%) and gender expression (39% vs. 11%) than non-LGB students.[65] In addition, LGB students experienced higher levels of victimization at school than their peers (see Figures 21 and 22). For example, LGB students were more than four times as likely to have experienced verbal harassment based on their sexual orientation (81% vs. 18%) and more than twice as likely to have been verbally harassed based on their gender (47% vs. 21%).[66] LGB students were also more likely to have experienced physical harassment and assault based on their sexual orientation, gender and gender expression than students who were not LGB.[67] Even though LGB students experienced more harassment, it is important to note that about one in ten non-LGB students reported having been harassed because other students perceived them to be lesbian, gay or bisexual. This finding demonstrates that heterosexual students may experience harassment

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Figure 21. Experiences of Verbal Harassment by Sexual Orientation
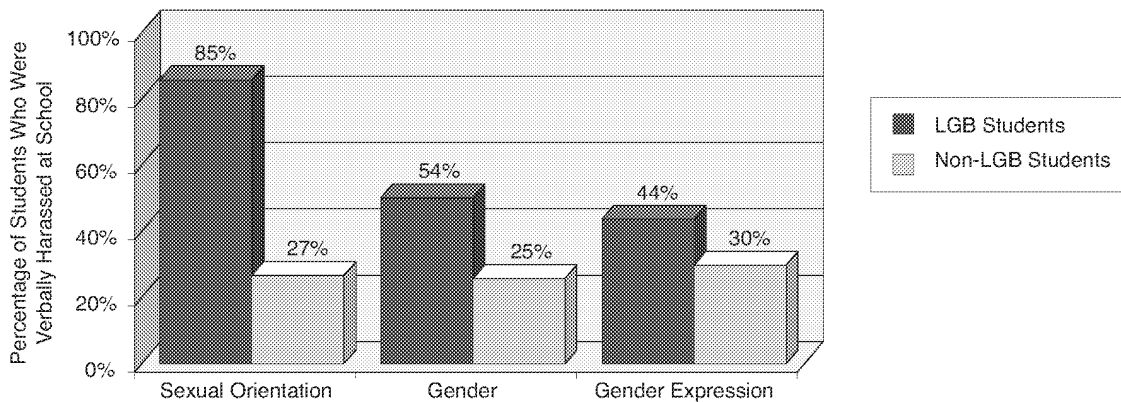
Figure 22. Experiences of Physical Harassment and Assault by Sexual Orientation
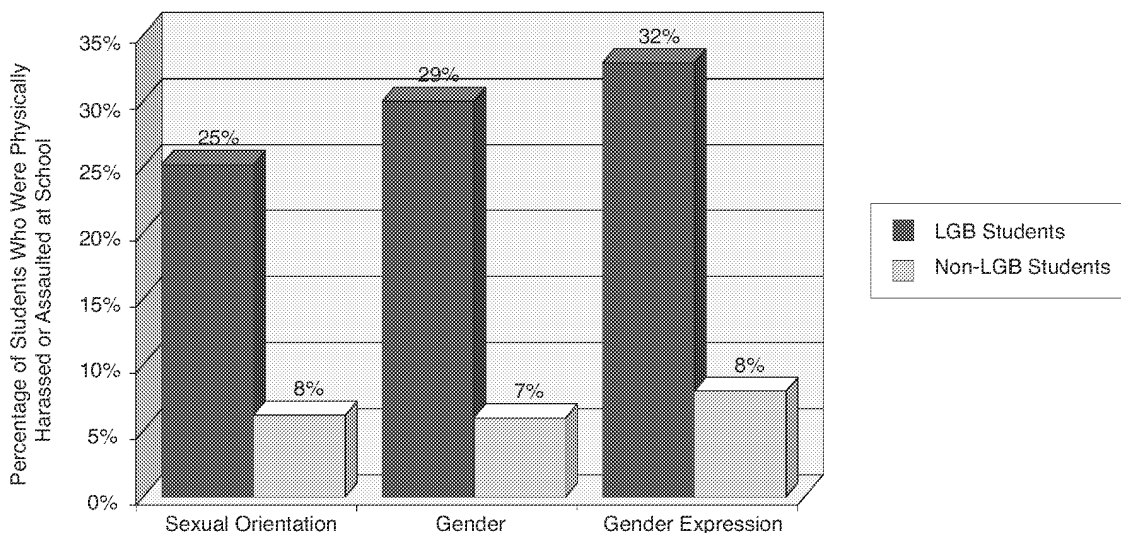
because other students believe that they are LGB simply because their parents are LGBT.

Although one might expect there to be differences between LGB and heterosexual students in their experiences of harassment based on sexual orientation, it is interesting to note that the only other significant differences in victimization were those related to gender and gender expression. Although LGB students were in the minority in the sample, differences in gender-based victimization may be a result of the greater number of LGB female students in our study. Our sample of students in this study was predominately female; the female students in the sample were more likely to identify as LGB than male students in the sample, and female students historically report more in-school victimization based on gender than male students. Nevertheless, these findings may also speak to the relationship between sexual orientation and gender and to the ways in which homophobia and bias about

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"gender-appropriate" behavior and appearance intersect. Previous research has demonstrated how sexual orientation, gender and gender expression are inextricably linked, particularly for LGBT students: students who are LGBT often experience higher levels of victimization based on sexual orientation, gender and gender expression than non-LGBT students, and students who have a non-normative gender expression are often targets for harassment as they are perceived to be lesbian or gay.[68]

Comparisons by Gender. There were some significant differences by gender in reported experiences of safety and harassment.[69] None of the male students in the study reported feeling unsafe because of their gender compared to more than a tenth of female students (14%).[70] In addition, whereas about a fifth of male students reported that they had been verbally harassed in school based on gender, 35% of female students had experienced this form of harassment (see Figure 23).[71] Female students were almost twice as likely to have been sexually harassed at school compared to male students (47% vs. 25%), and were also more likely to have experienced relational aggression (81% vs. 64%).[72] Male students were more likely, however, to report experiencing harassment that was physical in nature: 20% had been physically harassed or assaulted at school because they had an LGBT parent, compared to 8% of female students.[73]

Comparisons Between Students of Color and White Students. We also found significant differences in the experiences of students of color versus white students in our study, with regard to negative experiences related to their race or ethnicity.[74] As shown in Figure 24, students of color in our study were more likely to report feeling unsafe at school because of their race or ethnicity than white students (12% vs. 3%).[75] Students of color were also more likely to report that they experienced harassment and assault at school based on their race or ethnicity. Almost half (43%) of the students of color had experienced racially or ethnically motivated verbal harassment at school, compared to 18% of their white peers.[76] Sixteen percent of students of color reported being physically harassed or assaulted at school because of their race/ethnicity, versus only 2% of white students (see also Figure 24).[77]

Comparisons by School Type and Level. We were also interested in whether students' experiences varied by the type (public, private-religious, private-other) and level (middle or high school) of school they attended, and found some differences in terms of students' being discouraged by school staff from talking about their family or LGBT parent in school. Students who were in religious-affiliated private schools were almost twice as likely as students in public schools to have been discouraged by school staff (43% vs. 23%), and seven times as likely as students in non-religious private schools (43% vs. 6%).[78] High school students were twice as likely as middle school students to say that school staff had discouraged them from talking about their parents or family in school (27% vs. 13%).[79]

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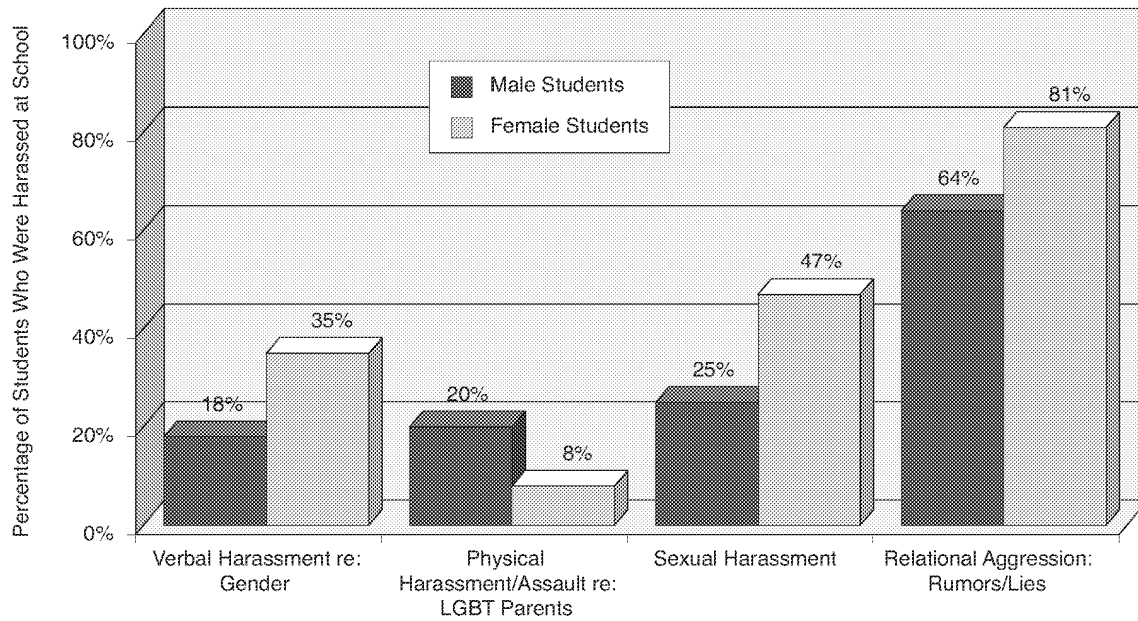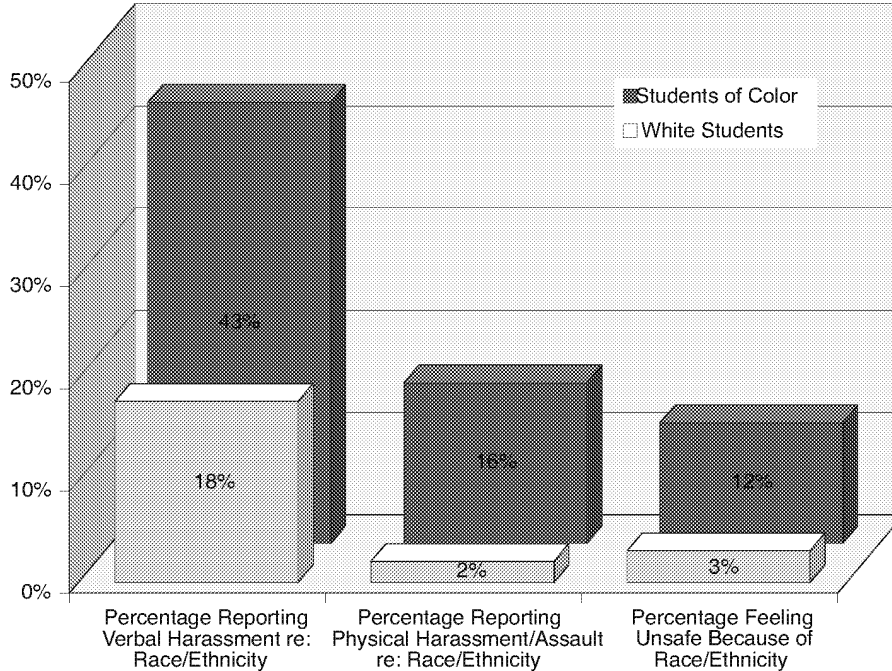**Figure 23. Experiences of Harassment by Gender:
Male vs. Female Students**

**Figure 24. Experiences of Safety and Harassment Based on
Race/Ethnicity: Students of Color vs. White Students**

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Comparisons with General Population of Secondary School Students

Given that this study was focused solely on the experiences of LGBT families, it does not provide any relative comparison with the experiences of students in general. The experiences of students from LGBT families may differ from the experiences of other students. For example, students with LGBT parents may experience unique forms of harassment not experienced by other students, such as being verbally harassed because they are from an LGBT family. Furthermore, because they may already experience victimization based on their family composition, students with LGBT parents may also be more likely to experience forms of harassment that more commonly occur in schools, such as harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation. For this reason, we compared the experiences of students with LGBT parents in this study with those of a national sample of secondary school students.[80] Specifically, we examined differences in experiences of verbal harassment, which were the most common forms of harassment, as well as sexual harassment, relational aggression (i.e., target of mean rumors or lies) and personal property damage in school.

Figure 25 shows significant differences between the two samples on harassment. Students with LGBT parents were somewhat more likely than the general population of secondary school students to report that they had experienced verbal harassment in school because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, and an actual or perceived disability. Furthermore, students in the current study were more likely to have been sexually harassed in school (40% v. 25%) and more likely to have been the target of mean rumors or lies (75% v. 50%).[81]

We also examined differences in the frequency of skipping classes or missing days of school because of feeling unsafe and found that some students with LGBT parents may have more limited access to their education than students in general. Students in the current study were more than twice as likely to have skipped a class in the past year because of feeling unsafe (15% v. 6%) and to have missed at least one entire day of school also because of feeling unsafe (17% v. 5%).[82]

Mistreatment by Adult Members of the School Community

Mistreatment did not always come from other students but also from adult members of the school community. Students were asked whether they had experienced mistreatment or had received negative comments from members of the school community, including teachers, the principal, other school staff and the parents of other students. As shown in Figure 26, students most commonly reported that they had negative interactions with parents of other students in their school: nearly a quarter of students had been mistreated by or

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Figure 25. Comparisons of Students' Experiences of Verbal Harassment: Students with LGBT Parents vs. National Sample of Students
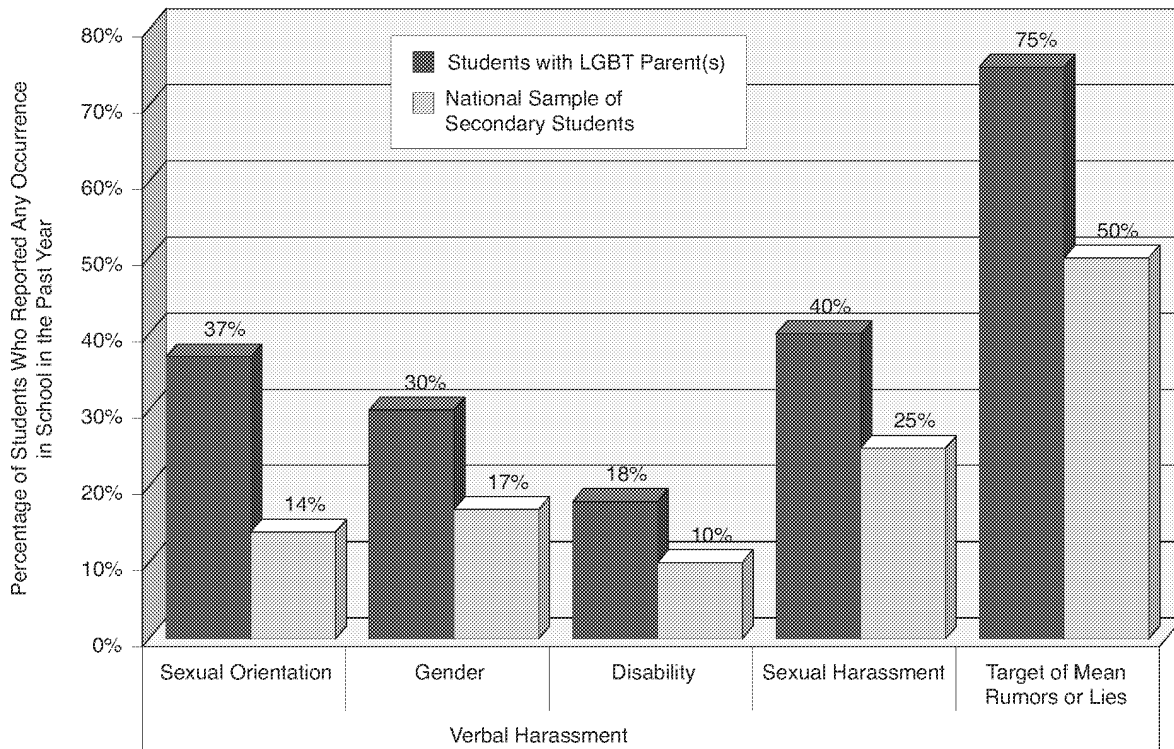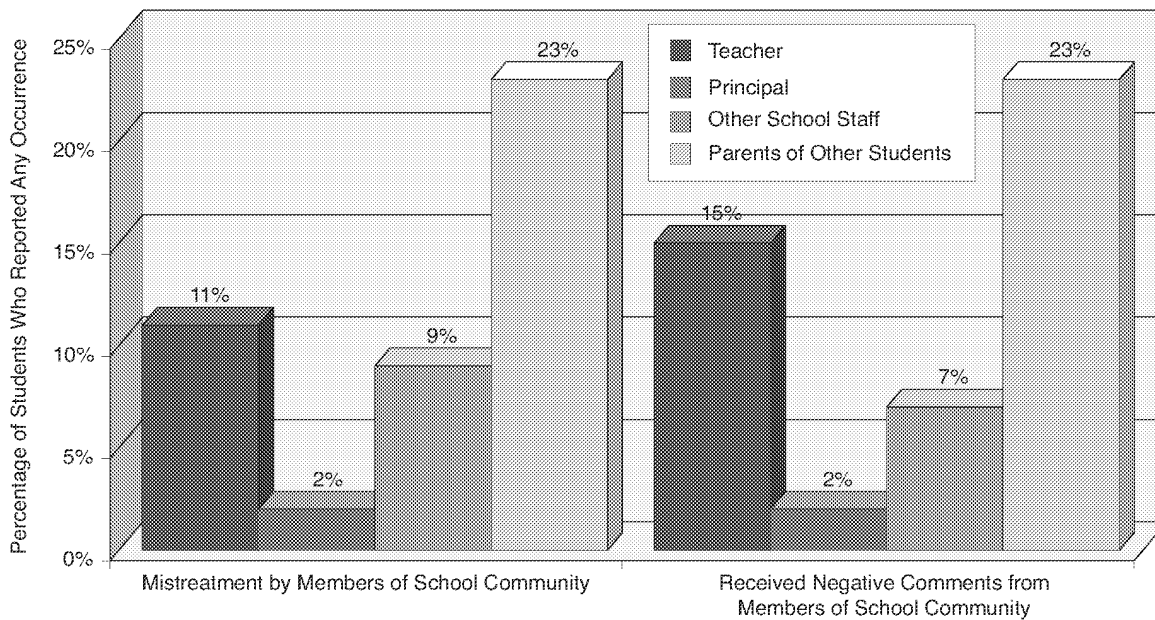

Figure 26. Other Negative Events in School Experienced by Students with LGBT Parents

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received negative comments from the parents of other students because they had an LGBT parent (23% for both). About a tenth of the students also reported mistreatment or negative comments from a teacher (11% and 15%, respectively) and nearly a tenth reported such behaviors from other school staff.

What is particularly disturbing is the fact that so many students reported being mistreated by teachers and other staff at their school. Such actions, of course, may have direct, detrimental effects for the student with LGBT parents. Furthermore, any adult in the school community who mistreats a student because he or she has an LGBT parents, whether it is a teacher or another school staff person, may be sending a message to other students that there is something wrong with having an LGBT parent and that mistreating people who come from an LGBT family is acceptable. This message may influence how students react to and treat their peers who have an LGBT parent. There were, in fact, significant differences in relation to the behavior of school staff toward students with LGBT parents, and the behavior of other students. As shown in Figure 27, all of the students who had been mistreated by teachers or by other school staff because they had an LGBT parent also reported being mistreated by their peers (versus only a third of students who had not been mistreated by school staff).[83] Furthermore, students who reported that they heard negative remarks about having an LGBT parent from staff at their school were much more likely to have heard these remarks from other students (see Figure 28).[84] These findings speak to the impact that the actions of teachers and other school personnel have on young people and to the importance of educating staff as well as students about family diversity and the importance of demonstrating respect for all types of families.

Students' Experiences of Exclusion and Discrimination in School

In our discussion of the parent-school relationship, we illustrated that many parents in the survey felt excluded from the school community or felt that they were not able to participate fully in school activities because of being LGBT. For the children of LGBT parents, exclusion from classroom activities, whether direct or indirect, may be yet another form of mistreatment in school and another indicator of a negative school climate. Thus, we asked students several questions in order to document how often they may have experienced feeling excluded from their school community specifically because they had an LGBT parent. When asked how often they had ever felt like they could not fully participate at school, 30% of students said that this occurred. Furthermore, about a fifth (22%) of students said that a teacher, principal or other school staff person had discouraged them from talking about their family at school, and more than a third (36%) had felt that school personnel did not acknowledge their LGBT family (e.g., not permitting one parent to sign a student's form because s/he was not the legal parent/guardian).

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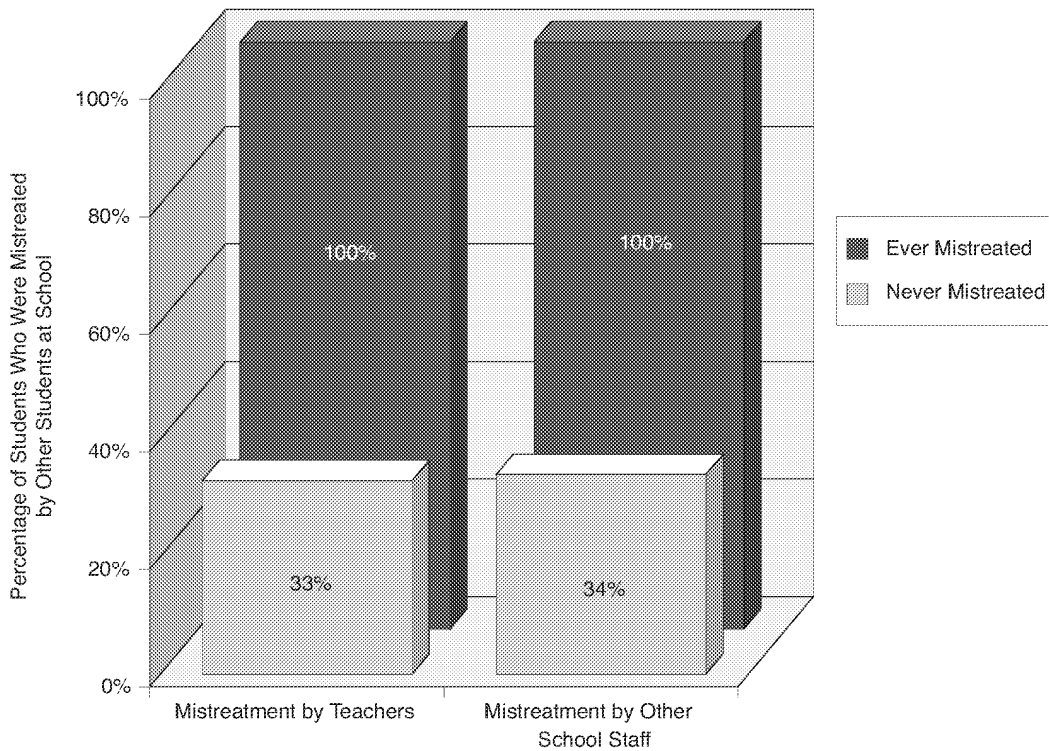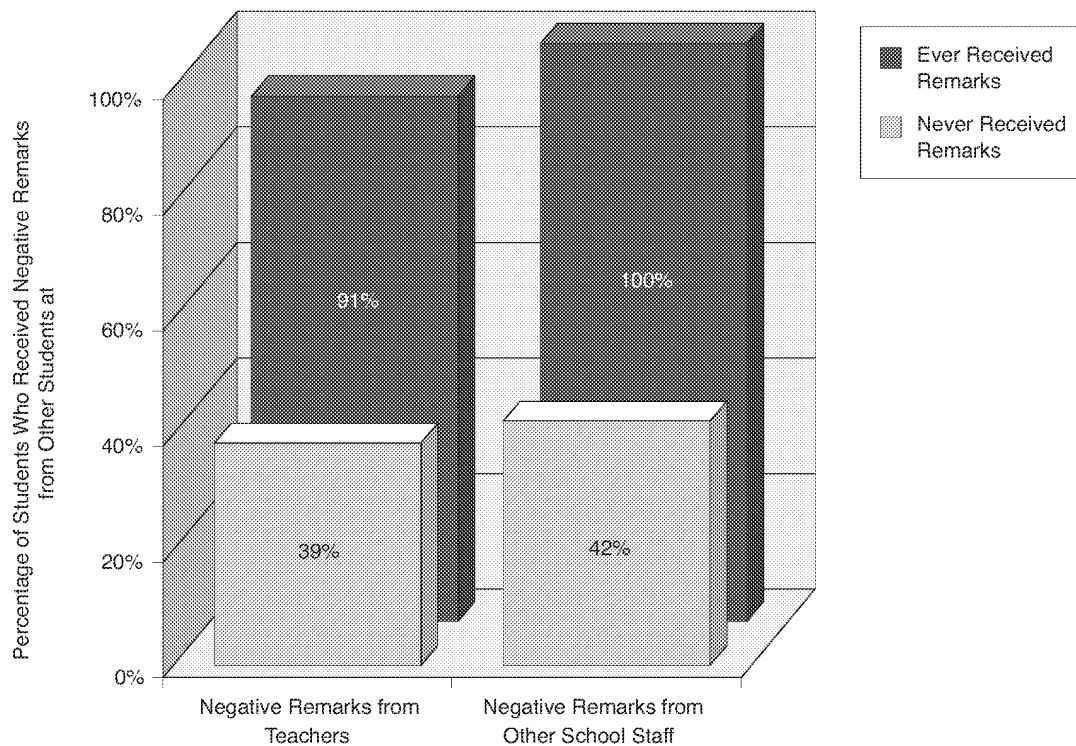**Figure 27. Mistreatment by Peers in Relation to Mistreatment by School Staff**

Figure 28. Negative Remarks from Peers in Relation to Negative Remarks from Teachers and Other School Staff

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A fifth (20%) of students reported feeling excluded from school or classroom activities in the past school year specifically because they had LGBT parents. Students who said they had felt excluded were asked to describe a recent experience. There were three major themes across these students' experiences: 1) feeling excluded because they received negative responses about having LGBT parents, 2) feeling excluded because they were discouraged by school staff from being open about their parents or family, and 3) feeling excluded because LGBT families were not included in school activities.

Negative Responses to LGBT Families. Many students described situations where they felt excluded because they did not feel they could talk openly about their family at school without there being negative repercussions. Several students commented that they did not want their peers to know that they had an LGBT parent, often for fear of being harassed or receiving negative comments from other students. For example, a 7th grade student did not discuss her family at school because she was "afraid of getting made fun of for having 2 moms and not a 'normal' family." During a classroom discussion about families, a 9th grader described how he talked about "generic things" rather than share real details about his family. A student in the 8th grade described how other students reactions to discussion about LGBT people caused her to avoid mentioning her own family:

> When people and our teacher talk about LGBT people in class and everyone laughs because they think it's gross or something I feel uncomfortable because I'm the only one not laughing. It's like there [they're] making fun of me in a way.

Some students avoided talking about their parents in school because they had already experienced negative responses. For example, a student in the 10th grade described how he was "verbally attacked at a school dance because his Mom is Gay" and the event became physically violent when both students "started punching each other." An 11th grade student described the following experience:

> In speech class we were told to tell a speech about the person who has influenced us the most. I wanted to talk about my mother, who is a lesbian. Students made comments on how a "sinner" couldn't be a good influence.

Discouraged from Being Open About Family by Faculty/School Staff. Several students described feeling excluded because teachers or other school staff discouraged them from talking about their family at school or from including their parents in school events:

> In Spanish [class], we were doing a project that involved describing our home and introducing our family. I talked to my teacher and explained my situation, and she said it would be better for me to say i had a single mother and not mention her partner at all. It made me mad, so I made a point of including my other mom, and I ended up failing the project. (11th grader)

> We had a dance team banquet and we were supposed to have

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our parents come, but our directors said it would be better if i only brought one of my moms so i would not cause a disruption. (9th grader)

They said I couldn't put a picture of my parents kissing on a picture collage even though other children could. (9th grader)

I was doing a family tree and got told to put my step mom down as an aunt… (8th grader)

School Activities Not Inclusive of LGBT Families. Many students described situations where they felt excluded from classroom activities, particularly activities that involved discussion of families, because there were no representations of LGBT families or the activity was based on the assumption that students' came from "traditional" families with two heterosexual parents. For example, an 8th grade student described the following experience about completing a class assignment:

I was told on the worksheet to list my extended family. There [were] options of what to put about divorced families and etc., but nothing about lesbian parents. I felt excluded and bad so I didn't complete the assignment.

Another 8th grade student described how her "teacher insisted I put my birth mother and birth father" on her family tree. A student in the 12th grade explained a recent incident as follows:

My biology class discussed genetics and my class assignment was to go home and record the hair color, eye color and other physical attributes of my MOTHER AND FATHER, when I returned my information with the data from my two mothers, my teacher told me I had done the assignment wrong and told me to go home and ask my mother about my father's attributes, as all students have a mother and father, and my mother must at least know the color of my father's eyes and hair.

In addition to classroom assignments, students described other types of experiences at school where their family structure was not acknowledged. For example, an 11th grader was not permitted to go home sick from school with his "other dad" unless the school had permission from his "first dad." A 12th grade student described difficulties in filling out parental information on college application forms:

College applications have a space for parent/guardian information, however, there is only space for two parents, under the titles: MOTHER and FATHER. This upset me not only because I have three "parents" but also because I am aware of many GLBTQ families who would not be able to fill out a form that is so rigid in its definition of parents.

Although most students in our survey did not report experiencing overt acts of exclusion or discrimination, many described situations in which they were kept from fully participating in school activities or events because they had LGBT parents (e.g., not having the option to

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include both parents on a family tree; being told that they should not go out for sports because they had gay parents). Furthermore, some students described being subjected to biased remarks about LGBT parents (from teachers as well as students), and experiencing incidents of name-calling and harassment at school based on their family constellation.

Other Negative Events Experienced at School

About a quarter (24%) of students in our study said that in the past year they had experienced other negative events at school specifically because they had LGBT parents. These students were asked to describe a recent event and among those who provided a description, most described experiences in which they were harassed at school. For example, a student in the 10th grade wrote that he frequently heard derogatory remarks about his family in the school hallways. Several other students described incidents of homophobic name-calling and verbal harassment at school, incidents in which the students themselves were often the target:

> *People saying that I was a lesbian just because my moms were. (8th grader)*

> *They called my dad a fag once [and] this kid called me a fag because of my dads. (7th grader)*

> *When some people found out that my dad was gay they said "Oh, that explains why [name of respondent] acts like fag." (8th grader)*

> *Called "devil's daughter" "Lesbo." Someone said "At least my mom's not gay" + " I'd kill myself if my mom was gay." (8th grader)*

One 8th grade student commented that another student spread lies about her parent at school: "A girl at school told a lie that my mom was making out with another woman behind the bleacher at a school event."

Interestingly, some students described how some people at school questioned their athletic abilities based on the fact that they had LGBT parents. For example, a 10th grade student who had two gay fathers described how "some teachers do not think I should do sports because I have gay parents." A 12th grader reported:

> *I play basketball and softball and when my moms come to see me some of my peers insist on making fun of me and ask how I got into sports with no dad in the house...*

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Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault

Previous research on secondary school students has shown that students often do not report harassment to school officials or even their parents and the results from the current survey on students with LGBT parents were no exception.[85] Students who had experienced harassment and/or assault at school were asked how often they reported these events to school authorities. As shown in Figure 29, less than half (48%) of students who had experienced verbal or physical harassment or physical assault at school in the past year said that they ever reported the incident to a teacher, principal or other school staff. Students were much more likely to report incidents to their own parent or guardian than to school staff or other family members—two-thirds (66%) indicated that they had told their parent or guardian about incidents of victimization. In addition, 43% of students said that they had reported incidents to a family member other than a parent or guardian.[86]

Having a parent who is LGBT may make it easier for students to discuss problems with harassment in school, particularly for LGBT students. Compared to available data on the experiences of LGBT students, students in our study who were LGBT were much likelier to report incidents of harassment or assault to their parents.[87] About two-thirds (67%) of LGBT students with LGBT parents said they had ever reported harassment to a parent or guardian, with more than a quarter (29%) doing so always. Less than half (41%) of the LGBT students in GLSEN's 2005 National School Climate Survey ever reported harassment to a parent or guardian and only 8% reported doing so always. Unfortunately, we do not have comparable data for non-LGBT students so we cannot determine whether all students with LGBT parents are more likely to report harassment to their parents.

Parents were also asked about their level of awareness of their child's experiences in school with regard to harassment. In particular, parents were asked how often their child had told them about being harassed, bullied or having problems with other students at school, in general, and because of having an LGBT parent, specifically. As shown in Figure 30, over half (58%) of parents reported that their child had ever told them about being harassed in school for any reason, with nearly a quarter reporting at least some of the time ("Sometimes," "Often," or "Frequently"). A smaller percentage of parents disclosed that their child had told them about being bullied or harassed because of having an LGBT parent—28% of parents reporting any occurrence and 11% reporting at least sometimes. In general, parents of middle school students were more likely to report that their child told them about being harassed or bullied in school (see Figure 31). Parents of children in elementary school were less likely than other parents to report their child had been harassed or bullied because of having LGBT parents than secondary school parents.[88]

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Figure 29. Frequency of Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Assault

Legend:
- ■ Always
- ▨ Most of the Time
- □ Some of the Time

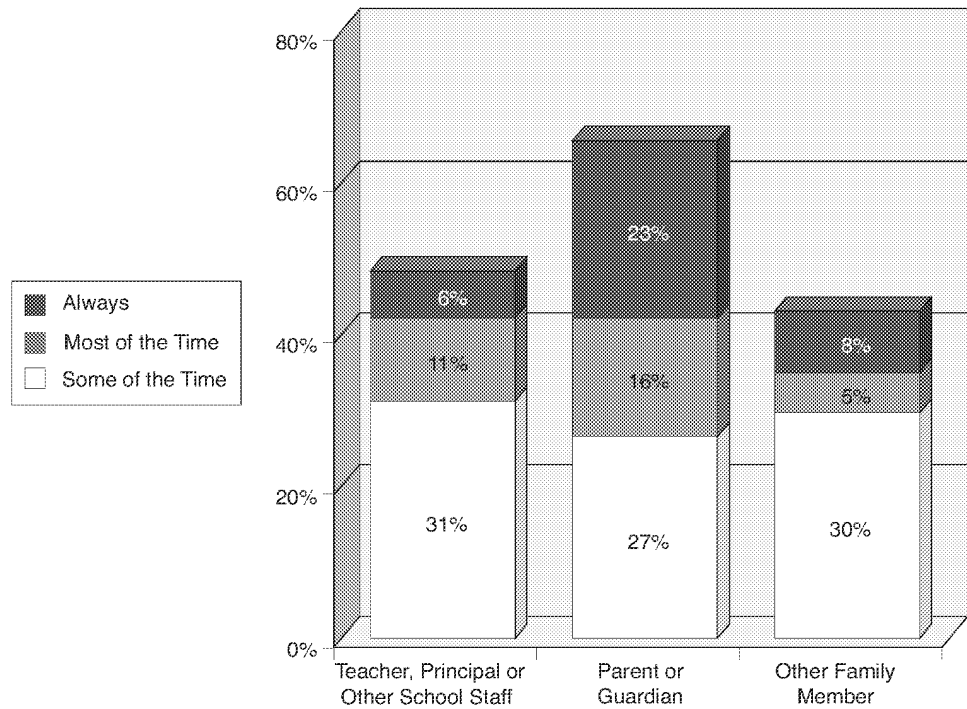**Figure 30.** Parental Reports on Frequency of Harassment Child Has Experienced in School: General and Specific to Being From an LGBT Family

Legend:
- ■ Frequently
- ▨ Often
- ▨ Sometimes
- □ Rarely

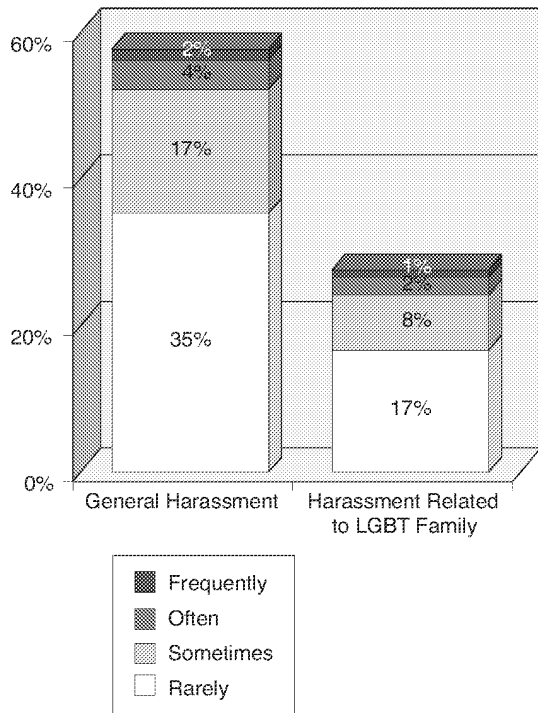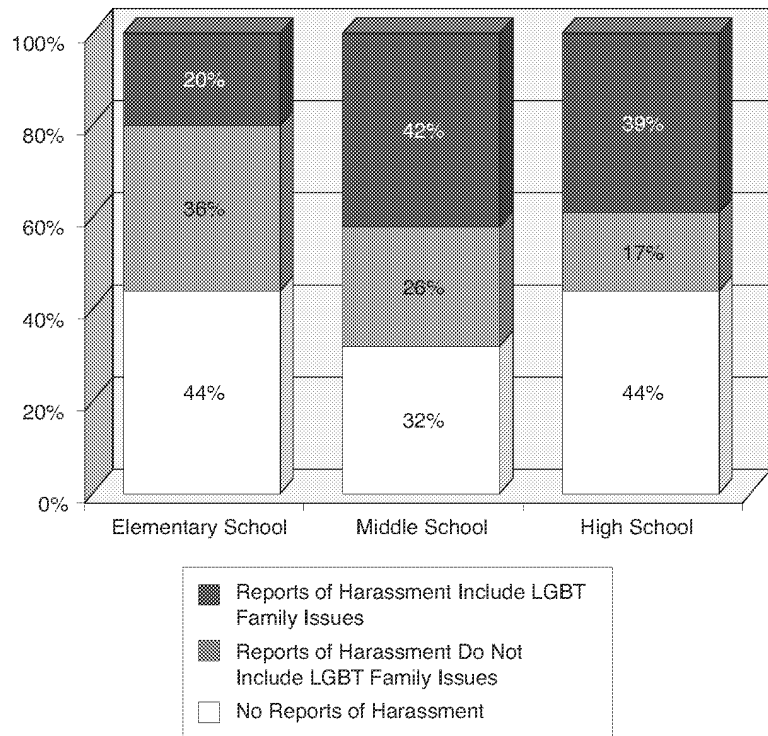**Figure 31.** Parental Reports on Frequency of Harassment Child Has Experienced in School: General and Specific to Being From an LGBT Family

Legend:
- ■ Reports of Harassment Include LGBT Family Issues
- ▨ Reports of Harassment Do Not Include LGBT Family Issues
- □ No Reports of Harassment

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Parental Intervention with School Personnel Regarding Harassment

Students who had reported harassment to their parents or other family members were asked whether the adults had intervened on their behalf with school personnel. More than half (57%) of students who reported incidents to their parent/guardian said that their parent/guardian then talked with school staff, and a quarter of those who reported incidents to other family members said that they addressed the matter with school personnel.

Parents who had been told by their child that she or he had been harassed or bullied in school were also asked whether they had addressed the matter with school personnel. Not surprisingly, the frequency with which parents' intervened with school staff was related to the frequency with which their child reported harassment in school. Figure 32 illustrates that a higher frequency of reported harassment was related to a higher frequency of intervention—whereas about half (47%) of parents whose child reported harassment rarely intervened with school personnel frequently or often, three-quarters (75%) of parents whose child reported harassment intervened frequently or often.[89] Given that we did not ask parents specific information about the nature of the harassment that their child reported to them, we cannot make any determinations about how LGBT parents decided to intervene or not intervene. Future research would be needed to understand parents' decision-making about when and how often they decide to speak to school staff about their child's harassment in school.

Parents were also asked how effective they believed the intervention to be and how receptive school personnel were. As shown in Figure 33, over half (52%) of these parents had addressed their child's being harassed frequently or often. When asked how effective their intervention with school personnel was, the majority of parents (77%) reported that it was very or somewhat effective (see Figure 34). The vast majority of parents also reported that the school personnel were receptive to them, with nearly two-thirds (64%) reporting that they were very receptive (see Figure 35).

Parent's level of intervention, their perceptions of the effectiveness of the intervention and of staff's receptiveness to them varied significantly by school level (see Figure 36).[90] Parents of high school students were less likely to intervene than parents of elementary or middle school students. High school parents were also less likely to think their intervention was effective than elementary school parents. Although the majority of parents at all school levels found the school personnel to be receptive when they had intervened regarding their child's harassment in school, elementary school parents found them to be more receptive than other parents.

As with LGBT students, the problem still remains for students with LGBT parents that they do not report harassment to school

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authorities and often do not think school personnel will effectively address the problem. Fortunately, most of the students with LGBT parents had told their parent or guardian when victimized in school and most also reported that the parent or guardian addressed the matter with the school. The reports from the LGBT parents in this study were consistent. The percentage of parents who reported being aware of their child being harassed was similar to the percentage of students reporting harassment. Furthermore, most parents in the study reported that they had addressed the harassment with the school. Thus, in contrast to other populations of students such as LGBT students, it appears that students with LGBT parents may have more supports in that they may feel they can talk to their parents about negative experiences in school, particularly if these experiences are related to their family or perhaps even to their own sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Figure 32. Relationship Between Parents Addressing Child Harassment with School Personnel and Frequency of Reported Harassment
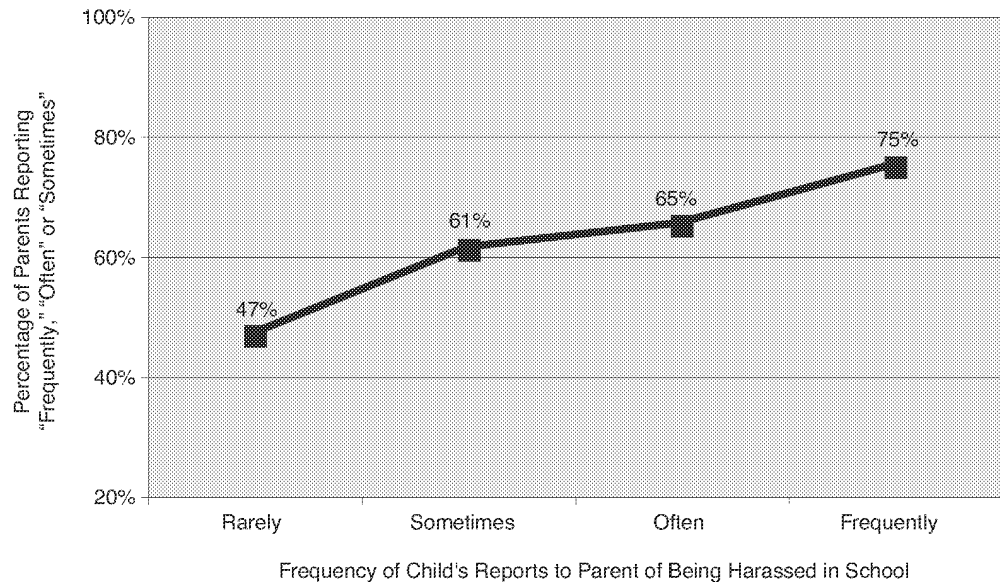

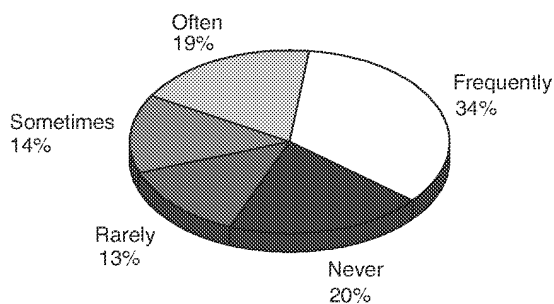Frequency of Child's Reports to Parent of Being Harassed in School

Figure 33. Parents' Reports on the Frequency of Addressing Bullying and Harassment with School Personnel

Figure 34. Parents' Reports of the Effectiveness of Addressing Bullying and Harassment with School Personnel
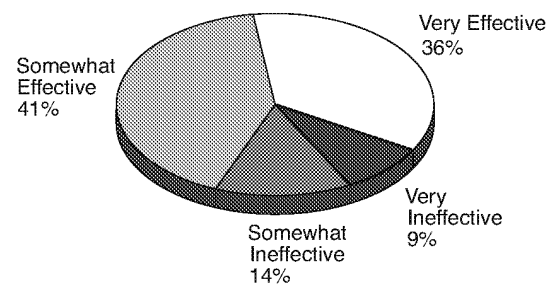

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Figure 35. Parents' Reports of the Receptiveness of School Personnel
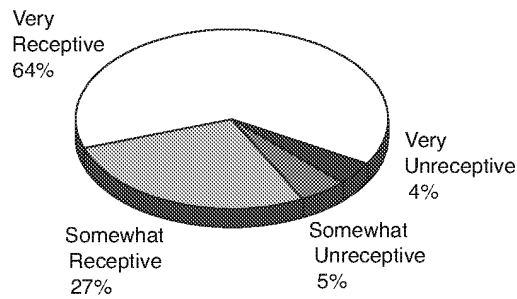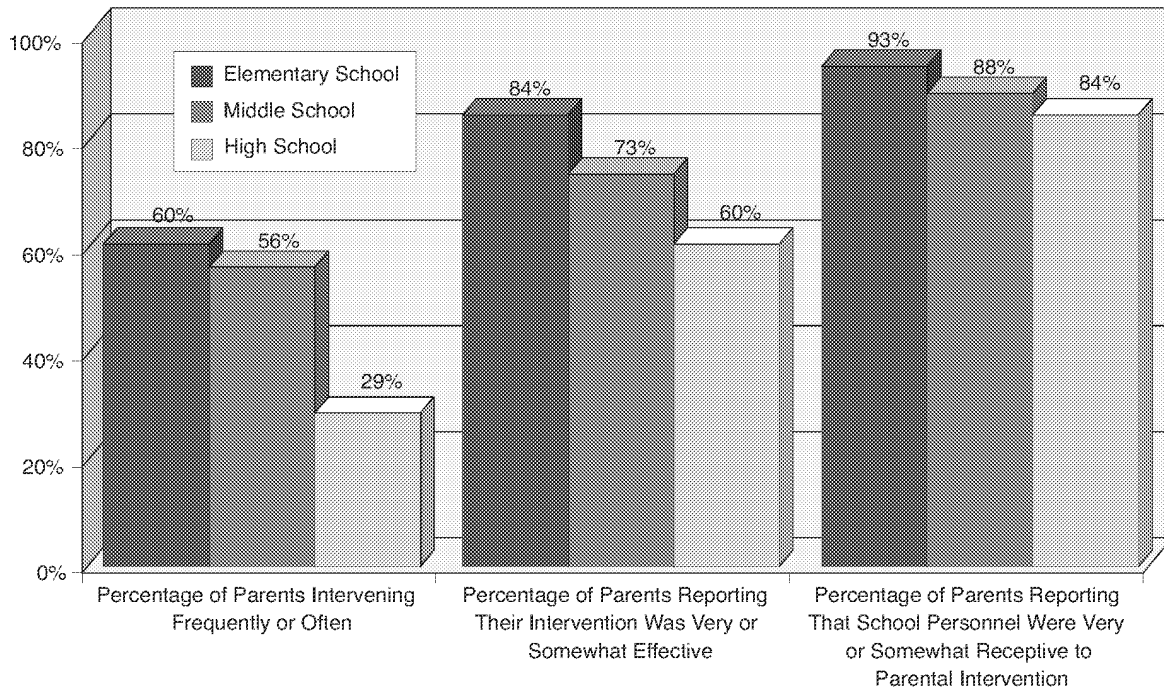to Parents' Addressing Bullying and Harassment

Figure 36. Parental Intervention Regarding Child's Harassment in School by School Level:
Frequency of Intervention, Effectiveness and Receptiveness of Staff

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Notes

58   Respondents were asked if they heard biased remarks from "a few of the students," "some of the students" or "most of the students" at their school.

59   Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America, a survey of students and teachers.* New York: GLSEN.

60   Chi-square nonparametric test was used to compare the percentages of students in the LGBT Family study who heard biased language "often" or "frequently" with the percentages of students who heard biased language "often" or "very often" from the national population. Homophobic remarks: χ^2=10.3, df=1, p<.01. Sexist remarks: χ^2=27.4, df=1, p<.001. Racist remarks: χ^2=4.3, df=1, p<.05.

61   Chi-square nonparametric test was used to compare the percentages of students in the LGBT family study who said that school staff intervened "most of the time" or "always" when hearing racist remarks with students who said that school staff intervened "often" or "very often" from the national population: χ^2=19.6, df=1, p<.001.

62   Differences between groups were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. The variables for missing classes and missing days of schools were dummy-coded into new variables representing no occurrence/any occurrence of the event and were treated as dependent variables. The multivariate effect was significant for both independent variables: missing classes, Pillai's trace=.20, F(7,144)=5.1, p<.001; missing days of school, Pillai's trace=.17, F(7,144)=4.3, p<.001. Univariate effects were considered at p<.01.

63   The variables for physical harassment and physical assault were combined into new variables and dummy-coded to represent no occurrence/any occurrence of the event. Given the low incidence of physical harassment and assault, Figure 18 represents only whether students ever experienced the particular event, i.e., those who reported "rarely," "sometimes," "often" or "frequently."

64   Given that this research question was examining harassment based on sexual orientation, we use "LGB" and not "LGBT" in this instance.

65   Chi-square tests were performed: Unsafe because of sexual orientation: χ^2=26.0, df=1, p<.001, ϕ=.42; unsafe because of gender expression: χ^2=13.7, df=1, p<.001, ϕ=.30.

66   Differences between groups were tested by multivariate analysis of variance. Percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. For verbal harassment, the multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.35, F(7, 114)=8.8, p<.001. The univariate effects were significant at p<.05.

67   The variables for physical harassment and physical assault were combined into new variables and dummy-coded to represent no occurrence/any occurrence of the event. Chi-square tests were performed. Physical harassment/assault based on sexual orientation: χ^2=7.2, df=1, p<.05, ϕ=.22. Physical harassment/assault based on gender: χ^2=11.3, df=1, p<.01, ϕ=.28. Physical harassment/assault based on gender expression: χ^2=11.5, df=1, p<.01, ϕ=.28

68   D'Augelli, A.R., Grossman, A. H., & Starks, M. T. (2006) Childhood gender atypicality, victimization, and PTSD among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 21,* 1462–1482.

Bochenek, M. & Brown, A. W. (2001). *Hatred in the hallways: Violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students in U.S. schools.* New York: Human Rights Watch.

Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America.* New York: GLSEN.

Fineran, S. (2001). Sexual minority students and peer sexual harassment in high school. *Journal of School Social Work,* 11, 50–69.

Kosciw, J. & Diaz, E. (2006). *The 2005 National School Climate Survey: The school-related experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

69   Due to the low number of respondents who identified as transgender (n=3), this analysis compares female- and male-identified respondents only.

70   Chi-square test was performed: χ^2=6.7, df=1, p<.01, ϕ=-.22.

71   Differences were examined using independent samples t-tests and percentages are for illustrative purposes. The t-statistic was significant: t= -4.1, df=130.3, p<.001.

72   Differences were examined using independent samples t-tests and percentages are for illustrative purposes. The t-statistic was significant for both sexual harassment (t= -3.447, df=123.8, p=.001) and relational aggression (t= -2.4, df=139, p<.05).

73   Chi-square test was performed: χ^2=3.8, df=1, p=.05, ϕ=.17.

74   "Students of color" were respondents who identified as African American, Latino or Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, Native American, or multiracial. It does not represent a monolithic group and we recognize that there may be significant differences in the experiences of youth who are categorized as "students of color." Due to the small size of the overall sample and the relatively small number of respondents who were students of color, we were unable to examine differences between or within the different racial/ethnic groups of respondents (e.g., the experiences of African American youth compared to white youth, or differences by gender within a racial/ethnic group).

75   Chi-square test was performed: χ^2=4.3, df=1, p<.05, ϕ=.17.

76   Percentages are for illustrative purposes. Differences between groups were tested by a multivariate analysis of variance, using all the variables for verbal harassment. The multivariate effect was marginally significant, Pillai's trace=.09, F(7,136)=2.0, p=.05. Verbal harassment based on race/ethnicity: Univariate effects were significant (p=.001). Additional analysis was conducted using an independent t-test and the t-statistic was significant: t= 2.9, df=71.4, p<.01.

77   Chi-square test was performed: χ^2=9.6, df=1, p<.05, ϕ=.26.

74

78   Percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. Group differences were examined using one-way analyses of variance. There were significant mean differences: $F(2, 148) = 3.3$, $p<.05$. Post hoc t-tests were significant at $p<.05$.

79   Percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. Differences were examined using independent samples t-test. The t-statistic was significant: $t = 2.6$, $df = 144.8$, $p = .01$.

80   Harris Interactive, Inc. & GLSEN Study: 2005 Data File. New York: GLSEN.

81   Differences between samples were tested by a multivariate analysis of covariance and percentages shown are for illustrative purposes. Because of the larger percentage of students identifying as LGB in the family study, LGB status was used as a covariate. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.01, $F(9,3434)=4.9$, $p<.001$. Because of the large sample size in the Harris Interactive and GLSEN study, univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$.

82   The percentages given are for illustrative purposes. Differences between samples were tested by a multivariate analysis of covariance controlling for LGB status. The multivariate effect was significant: Pillai's trace=.01, $F(2,3501)=19.4$, $p<.001$. Univariate effects were considered at $p<.01$ and were significant for both dependent variables.

83   Mistreatment by teachers and mistreatment by students; $\chi^2=25.6$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\phi=.43$. Pearson correlation for original interval level variables: $r=.58$, $p<.001$. Mistreatment by other school staff and mistreatment by students: $\chi^2=21.4$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\phi=.37$. Pearson correlation for original interval level variables: $r=.53$, $p=<.001$.

84   Negative remarks from teachers and negative remarks from students: $\chi^2=20.8$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\phi=.37$. Pearson correlation for original interval level variables: $r=.42$, $p<.001$. Negative remarks from other school staff and negative remarks from students: $\chi^2=13.7$, $df=1$, $p<.001$, $\phi=.30$. Pearson correlation for original interval level variables: $r=.42$, $p<.001$.

85   Harris Interactive & GLSEN (2005). *From teasing to torment: School climate in America.* New York: GLSEN.

      Kosciw, J. & Diaz, E. (2006). *The 2005 National School Climate Survey: The school-related experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students in our nation's schools.* New York: GLSEN.

86   Differences were examined using paired samples t-tests: "reporting to parents/guardians" versus "reporting to school staff:" $t(63)=-4.4$, $p<.001$; "reporting to parents/guardians" versus "reporting to other family members:" $t(62)=4.4$, $p<.001$.

87   GLSEN National School Climate Survey Study: 2005 Data File. New York; GLSEN. Chi-square nonparametric test performed to compare the percentage of LGBT students in the LGBT Family study who reported incidents of harassment/assault to their parents with the percentage of students from the 2005 NSCS: $\chi^2=4.0$, $df=1$, $p<.05$.

88   To examine differences in types of bullying and harassment by school level, we computed a new variable indicating whether a child had reported: no harassment, harassment in general but not including LGBT-related harassment and harassment including LGBT harassment. Differences across categories by school level were significant: $\chi^2=34.1$, $p<.001$, $df=4$, Cramer's V=.24.

89   Percentages are for illustrative purposes. The relationship between frequency of reported harassment and frequency of parental intervention was tested using correlation: Pearson $r=.18$, $p<.001$.

90   Differences across school type were tested by a series of oneway analyses of variance: Frequency of intervention, $F(2,329)=8.7$, $p<.001$; Effectiveness, $F(2,252)=4.5$, $p<.01$; Receptiveness: $F(2,263)=6.1$, $p<.01$. Post-hoc group comparisons were considered at $p<.05$. Percentages shown in Figure 32 are for illustrative purposes.

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Parents' Negative Experiences
in School or With School Personnel

For students of LGBT parents, bullying and harassment may affect their in-school relationships and their ability to learn and be part of the school community. For LGBT parents, negative experiences related to being LGBT or to their family constellation may affect their relationship with school personnel. Thus, we were interested in understanding whether the LGBT parents in our study had had any negative experiences at school or with school personnel related to their LGBT family. Specifically, parents were asked whether they had experienced any mistreatment, heard negative comments about being LGBT or received negative comments about parenting from various members of the school community: teachers, principals, other school staff, other parents at school and students at school. Overall, as shown in Figure 37, LGBT parents reported a relatively low incidence of negative experiences from school personnel. However, they were more likely to have reported mistreatment and hearing negative comments about being LGBT from other parents and from students at the school. A quarter (26%) of LGBT parents in the survey reported mistreatment from other parents and nearly a quarter (21%) reported hearing negative comments about being LGBT from students at the school. There were no significant differences in the frequency of parental mistreatment or negative experiences at school by the type of school (public, private-religious, private-other) or the school level (elementary, middle, high school).

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Figure 37. Parents' Negative Experiences with School Community
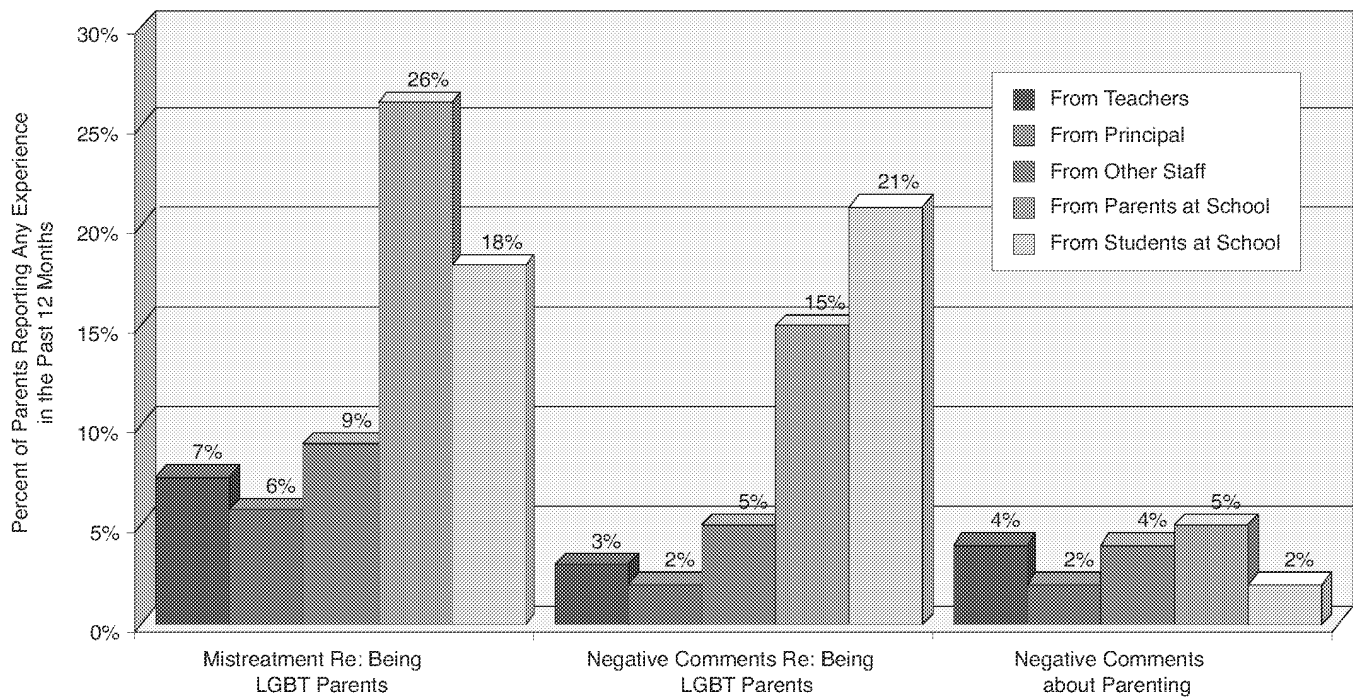
Types of Negative Experiences

In addition to the specific negative experiences queried, parents were also asked whether they had experienced other discrimination or negative events at their child's school related to being an LGBT parent. Again, about a quarter (25%) of parents reported they had experienced some additional type of negative event in the past year. Parents who indicated that they had experienced a negative event or mistreatment at their child's school in the past year were given the opportunity to describe a recent event. A total of 130 parents provided a description of their experiences. Several major themes emerged from the analysis of responses: exclusion from the school community, hostile behavior from school staff and parents, dealing with general discomfort and ignorance and having one's parenting skills called into question because of being an LGBT parent.

Exclusion from School Activities and Events. More than half (53%) of parents described various forms of exclusion from their school communities: being excluded or prevented from fully participating in school activities and events, being excluded by school policies and procedures, and being ignored and feeling invisible. Almost a fifth (15%) of parents described experiences of being or feeling excluded from activities in the school community. Parents described situations in which they, their partner or significant other,

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and/or their child were not able to participate in school activities because they were an LGBT parent. For example, several parents described incidents in which their child was not able to fully participate in or were left out of school activities:

> *For mother's day my son's teacher did not allow him to make 2 items for each mother.*

> *Only permitting my son to make one mother's day gift when clearly the teacher knows there are two mothers.*

> *We are a lesbian couple and they had a few father and child activities that left us and our son out.*

> *When the children were asked to make a family colage, [my child] included both sides of our family, when we went to parent night, hers had conveniently fallen off the wall and the teacher didn't have enough time to put it back up. The teacher told us we could just take it home with us.*

The following are some of the comments from parents who described situations in which they or their partner/significant other were excluded from school activities because they were LGBT:

> *We have been told by our pastor that we cannot be an aid in our children's classes and that the two of us cannot be on the school campus at the same time.*

> *There was a program on sexuality issues, and despite having talked with the principle numerous times about my skills and willingness to organize this, I did not know about a meeting regarding these issues until the day before....she was uncomfortable having me, as an out lesbian, be the leader of this program.*

One parent talked about how she and her partner do not attend school events because they are afraid of possible negative repercussions: "the only time I really feel mistreated is when my partner and I choose not to go to things with the school because of the fear someone might discriminate against us as a couple or a family."

Lack of Inclusive School Policies and Procedures. Some parents (12%) described situations in which they felt that the needs of their children and family were not addressed by their school. For example, the absence of positive representations of LGBT people and families from school curricula, and school policies that fail to acknowledge LGBT families were described. One parent said she/he often felt that they were not accepted in their school community "partly because the school [did] not do enough to educate the kids and staff about different kinds of families." Another parent commented that her/his "main concern with the elementary staff is their lack of materials which reflect families with same-sex parents." Furthermore, a couple of parents commented that their offers of assistance with regard to incorporating LGBT-inclusive materials into their child's school were ignored, dismissed or denied:

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> *Dismissed would be a better word. The principal doesn't acknowledge a need for any additional training or understanding of GLBT families and she stated this curtly and repeatedly in our interactions with her.*
>
> *I offered to read 'Heather has Two Mommies' to the class and the teacher said 'no.'*

Many responses were about school policies that discriminated against LGBT parents by failing to acknowledge the status of partners as legitimate parents or guardians:

> *I didn't feel 'mistreated' but we were both annoyed with the school sending multiple letters home as if we were roommates or neighbors, when we both have children at that school (her one, my one).*
>
> *My partner was not allowed to vote at our parent meeting because she is not considered a legal guardian.*
>
> *When my son broke his collarbone at school my partner and I went to pick him up and the nurse didn't want to listen to her because she was not 'his parent.'*

A few parents specifically mentioned district- and state-wide policies that prohibited schools from providing positive portrayals of lesbian and gay people:

> *[The] school board has a 'no promo homo' policy, so I can't, for example, volunteer to read a book with positive models of LGBT people:*
>
> *It is hard to describe how one feels mistreated in the school here in [name of state]. We have state statue that says schools cannot promote positive images of gay/lesbian people. It is even against this policy that teachers aren't allow to post safe triangle stickers, although some at the high school have done so. I think some teachers and administrators would be more positive and receptive if they weren't restricted by state statue. Our daughter participated in the National Day of Silence and it was well received by her teachers as well as the student body. She commented in some of her classes over half the students participated.*

Invisibility. A quarter (25%) of the parents who said they felt excluded from the school community experienced this exclusion as an overall feeling of neglect and invisibility. For example, a parent described feeling "shunned or ignored" and said that "people do not engage me like they do others, even when I am overtly helpful and friendly." Another parent said that although he/she had not experienced overt discrimination, he/she felt unwelcome and neglected in their child's school. Several other comments illustrate this experience:

> *[We] just don't get invited to participate or volunteer at school functions or outings*

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Not mistreat just cold towards us…at a parent teacher meeting

Being treated like not in the room when other parents are around

The teacher's assistant most always ignores my partner or is short with her, especially if she picks up my daughter without me.

When our daughter first started to attend the school all of the questions were directed to me and the teacher turned her back to my partner. This occurred several times initially, but after the first month it did not occur again. Also people always want to know who is the 'real' parent meaning who gave birth to our girls.

I have felt less mistreated than ignored, as the single Caucasian lesbian adoptive parent of two Latina girls. There are some economic assumptions (this is a wealthy liberal community) that are a struggle (cost of field trips etc.)

It was more neglect. The AP [Assistant Principal] could not bring herself to even acknowledge we were a lesbian couple. It came out as 'folks like you.'

Mostly I feel invisible.

Whereas many parents described being made to feel invisible, a few parents (6%) chose to not be out about their sexual orientation or gender identity to their child's school, often in order to protect their children from harassment and discrimination at school. For example, two parents said the following:

My son is very concerned about his peers and what they will think of my relationship. Since he is in middle school and there is a lot of homophobia among his peers, I have agreed to let him be the one to tell people. As far as I know, he has only told one other person.

This line of questions don't apply to my family because other than the principal, no faculty in my daughter's school is aware of our situation. Thankfully, our principal is supportive but suggested not sharing any personal information with teachers or parents because it's a Catholic school. We all agreed to allow my daughter to 'come out' as she felt comfortable.

Hostile Behavior. A little more than a quarter (27%) of parents described hostile behavior from school staff, parents and, at times, students. These experiences ranged from receiving "dirty looks" and hearing derogatory language to actual physical violence. For example, one parent said the following: "During my son's annual meeting with staff to discuss his special needs issues, when it came up that I have a 'partner' I was given dirty looks through the remainder of the meeting." Several parents had similar experiences:

There is nothing overt since this is [a major metropolitan area], but we know that comments are made behind our backs.

Mostly just stares and side-bar comments.

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